
3 animals simultaneously
20 days
100 days
PV=NRT
MAO-A
MAO-B
10 mg/kg/day
Veh
phenelzine
Selegiline
14 days
1st 2 animals = 2
was
Hearain region
E=mc²
remarks-please see
2 replications
Establish LINK
6 patch animals
6 rats
Stage 2
2 replications
What get's wet the more it dries
Clown
Bite Me


Is Your Life Changing?
If So, Join A "Life Cycles" Workshop.
do you feel sad?
CALL: 404.727.4799
CAMP
HAVE YOU BEEN ABUSED, ATTACKED OR INJURED?
Do you have a fear of flying?
Looking to clean up your writing?
RECYCLEMANIA!
Be Water Wise.
Al-Anon Family Groups


ATTENTION
Emory Mail Services
What to recycle?
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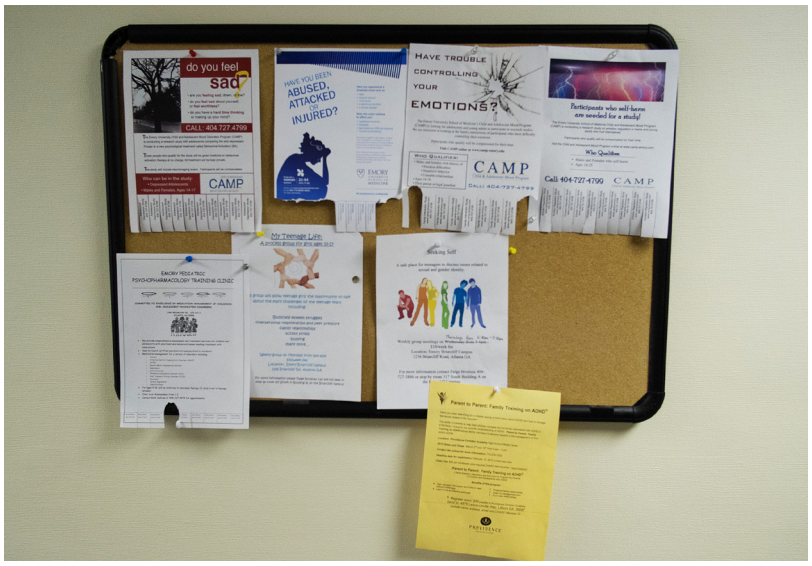
Praying in Silence and Song

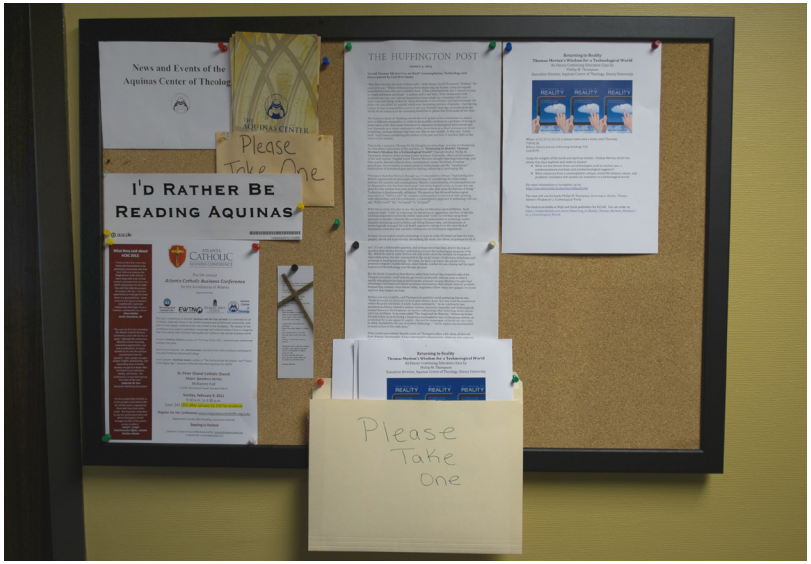

My Teenage Life:
Do You Feel Sad?
need help managing emotions?
We can do better.
HAVE TROUBLE CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS?
CAMP
HAVE YOU BEEN ABUSED, ATTACKED OR INJURED?

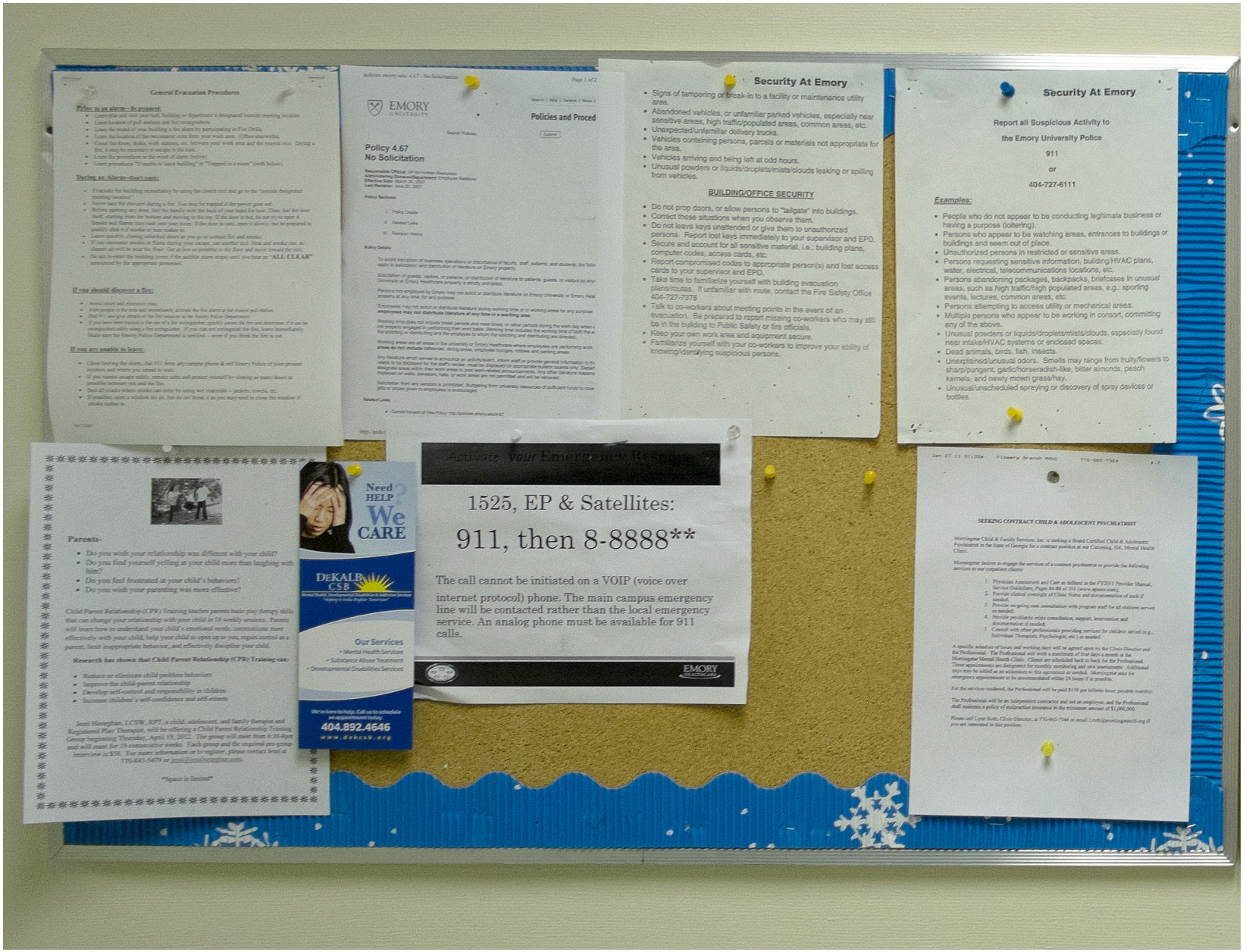

do you feel sad?
CALL: 404.727.4799
HAVE YOU BEEN ABUSED, ATTACKED OR INJURED?
HAVE TROUBLE CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS?
CAMP
My Teenage Life:
Parent to Parent: Family Training on ADHD

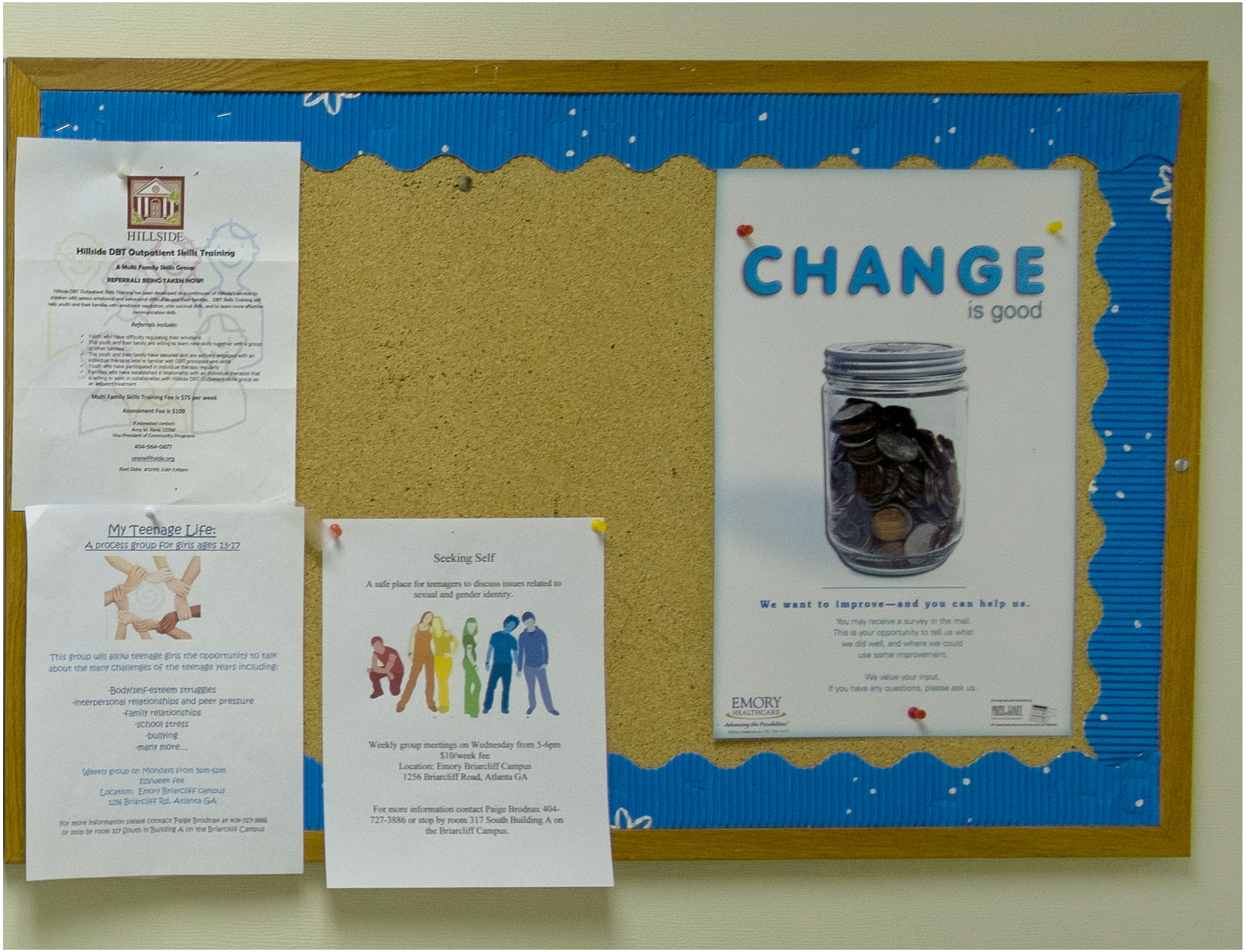

WOMEN WORKING
MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM
Telling Aids Training

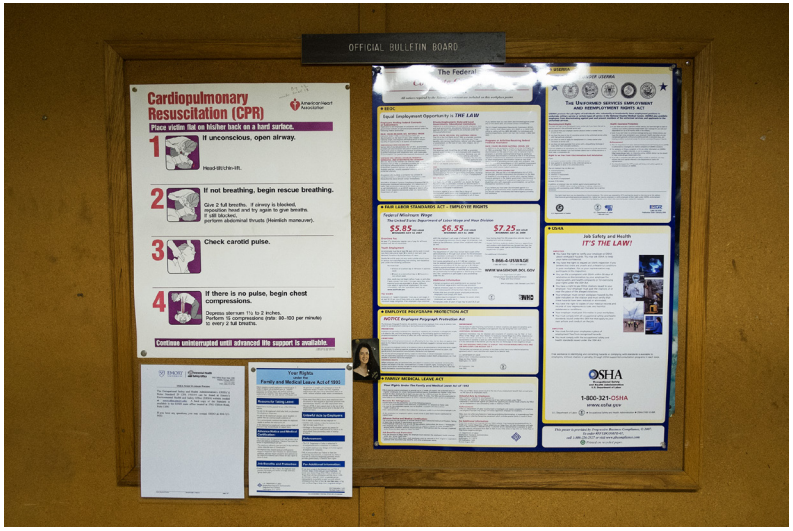

RECYCLEMANIA!
Be Water Wise.
Campus-wide Water Competition
February 1-28
ABUSED, ATTACKED INJURED?
Do you have a fear of flying?


EMORY report
States at Regional Risk looks at Andes politics
Forum 7
Resilience in East Congo
ICIS States @ Regional Risk
Emory in the Andes:
'Off-Centering' Political Risk


I'D RATHER BE READING AQUINAS
Please Take One
Please Take One

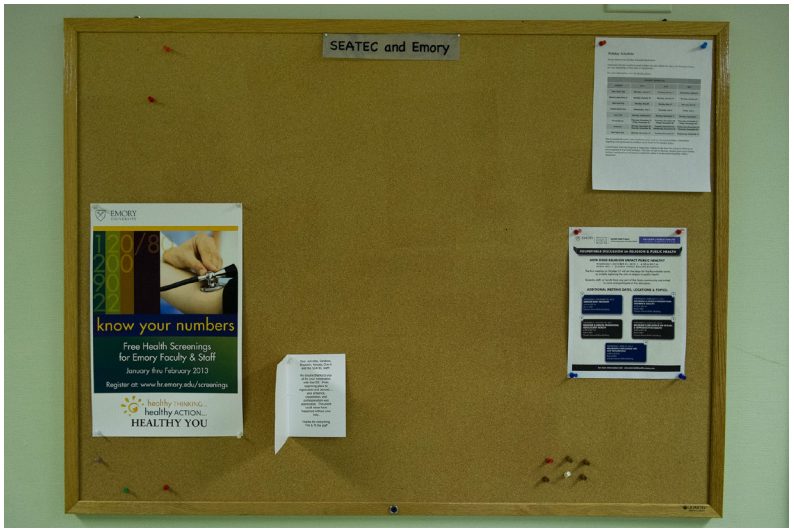

General Evacuation Procedures
Policy 4.67
No Solicitation
Policies and Proced
Security At Emory
Signs of tampering or break-in to a facility or maintenance utility area.
Abandoned vehicles, or unfamiliar parked vehicles, especially near sensitive areas, high traffic/populated areas, common areas, etc.
Unexpected/unfamiliar delivery trucks.
Vehicles containing persons, parcels or materials not appropriate for the area.
Vehicles arriving and being left at odd hours.
Unusual powders or liquids/droplets/mists/clouds leaking or spilling from vehicles.
BUILDING/OFFICE SECURITY
Do not prop doors, or allow persons to "tailgate" into buildings.
Correct these situations when you observe them.
Do not leave keys unattended or give them to unauthorized persons. Report lost keys immediately to your supervisor and EPD.
Secure and account for all sensitive material, i.e.: building plans, computer codes, access cards, etc.
Report compromised codes to appropriate person(s) and lost access cards to your supervisor and EPD.
Take time to familiarize yourself with building evacuation plans/routes. If unfamiliar with route, contact the Fire Safety Office 404-727-7378
Talk to co-workers about meeting points in the event of an evacuation. Be prepared to report missing co-workers who may still be in the building to Public Safety or fire officials.
Keep your own work area and equipment secure.
Familiarize yourself with your co-workers to improve your ability of knowing/identifying suspicious persons.
Security At Emory
Report all Suspicious Activity to
the Emory University Police
911
or
404-727-6111
Examples:
People who do not appear to be conducting legitimate business or having a purpose (loitering).
Persons who appear to be watching areas, entrances to buildings or buildings and seem out of place.
Unauthorized persons in restricted or sensitive areas.
Persons requesting sensitive information, building/HVAC plans, water, electrical, telecommunications locations, etc.
Persons abandoning packages, backpacks, briefcases in unusual areas, such as high traffic/high populated areas, e.g.: sporting events, lectures, common areas, etc.
Persons attempting to access utility or mechanical areas.
Multiple persons who appear to be working in consort, committing any of the above.
Unusual powders or liquids/droplets/mists/clouds, especially found near intake/HVAC systems or enclosed spaces.
Dead animals, birds, fish, insects.
Unexplained/unusual odors. Smells may range from fruity/flowers to sharp/pungent, garlic/horseradish-like, bitter almonds, peach kernels, and newly mown grass/hay.
Unusual/unscheduled spraying or discovery of spray devices or bottles.
Activate Your Emergency Response
1525, EP & Satellites:
911, then 8-8888**
The call cannot be initiated on a VOIP (voice over internet protocol) phone. The main campus emergency line will be contacted rather than the local emergency service. An analog phone must be available for 911 calls.
EMORY HEALTHCARE
Parents-
Do you wish your relationship was different with your child?
Do you find yourself yelling at your child more than laughing with him?
Do you feel frustrated at your child's behaviors?
Do you wish your parenting was more effective?
Child Parent Relationship (CPR) Training teaches parents basic play therapy skills that can change your relationship with your child in 10 weekly sessions. Parents will learn how to understand your child's emotional needs, communicate more effectively with your child, help your child to open up to you, regain control as a parent, limit inappropriate behavior, and effectively discipline your child.
Research has shown that Child Parent Relationship (CPR) Training can:
Reduce or eliminate child problem behaviors
Improve the child-parent relationship
Develop self-control and responsibility in children
Increase children's self-confidence and self-esteem
Jessi Heneghan, LCSW, RPT, a child, adolescent, and family therapist and Registered Play Therapist, will be offering a Child Parent Relationship Training Group beginning Thursday, April 19, 2012. The group will meet from 6:30-8pm and will meet for 10 consecutive weeks. Each group and the required pre-group interview is $50. For more information or to register, please contact Jessi at 770-843-5479 or jessi@smilitherapist.com.
Space is limited
Need HELP We CARE
DeKALB CSB
Our Services
Mental Health Services
Substance Abuse Treatment
Developmental Disabilities Services
404.892.4646
www.dekcsb.org
SEEKING CONTRACT CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST

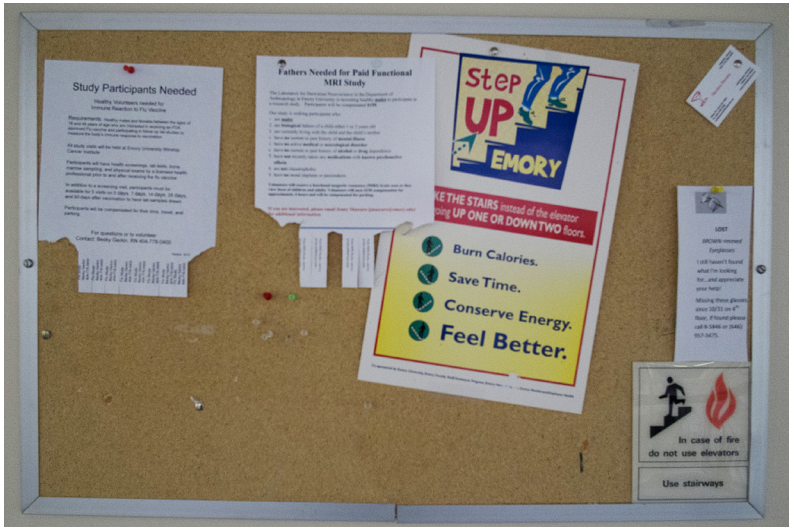

HILLSIDE
Hillside DBT Outpatient Skills Training
A Multi Family Skills Group
REFERRALS BEING TAKEN NOW!
Hillside DBT Outpatient Skills Training has been developed as a continuum of Hillside's services to children with serious emotional and behavioral difficulties and their families. DBT Skills Training will help youth and their families with emotional regulation, crisis survival skills, and to learn more effective communication skills.
Referrals include:
Youth who have difficulty regulating their emotions
The youth and their family are willing to learn new skills together with a group of other families.
The youth and their family have secured and are actively engaged with an individual therapist who is familiar with DBT principles and skills
Youth who have participated in individual therapy regularly
Families who have established a relationship with an individual therapist that is willing to work in collaboration with Hillside DBT Outpatient skills group as an adjunct treatment.
Multi Family Skills Training Fee is $75 per week
Assessment Fee is $100
If interested contact:
Amy M. Reed, LCSW
Vice President of Community Programs
404-564-0677
areed@hillside.org
Start Date: 8/12/09, 5:30-7:30pm
My Teenage Life:
A process group for girls ages 13-17
This group will allow teenage girls the opportunity to talk about the many challenges of the teenage years including:
-Body/self-esteem struggles
-interpersonal relationships and peer pressure
-family relationships
-school stress
-bullying
-many more...
Weekly group on Mondays from 5pm-6pm
$15/week fee
Location: Emory Briarcliff campus
1256 Briarcliff Rd. Atlanta GA
For more information please contact Paige Brodnax at 404-727-3886 or stop by room 317 South in Building A on the Briarcliff Campus
Seeking Self
A safe place for teenagers to discuss issues related to sexual and gender identity.
Weekly group meetings on Wednesday from 5-6pm
$10/week fee
Location: Emory Briarcliff Campus
1256 Briarcliff Road, Atlanta GA
For more information contact Paige Brodnax 404-727-3886 or stop by room 317 South Building A on the Briarcliff Campus.
CHANGE
is good
We want to improve—and you can help us.
You may receive a survey in the mail.
This is your opportunity to tell us what we did well, and where we could use some improvement.
We value your input.
If you have any questions, please ask us.
EMORY HEALTHCARE


OFFICIAL BULLETIN BOARD
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
Place victim flat on his/her back on a hard surface.
1 If unconscious, open airway.
2 If not breathing, begin rescue breathing.
3 Check carotid pulse.
4 If there is no pulse, begin chest compressions.
Continue uninterrupted until advanced life support is available.
IT'S THE LAW!
OSHA
1-800-321-OSHA

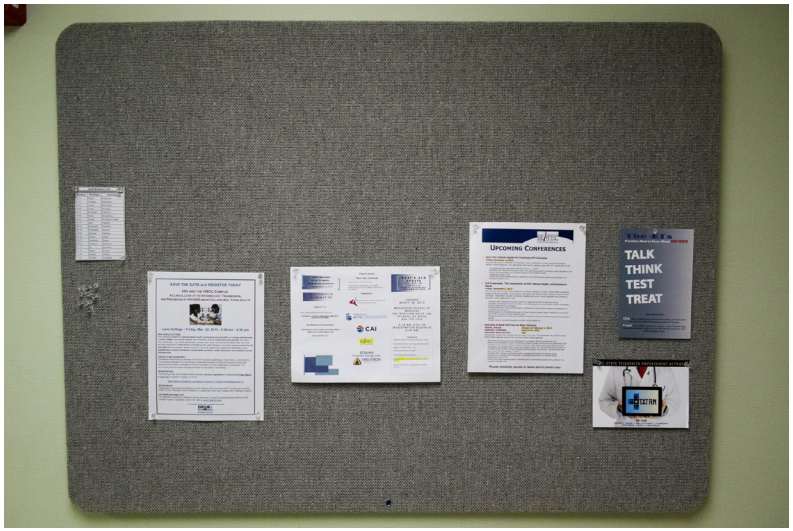

OFFICIAL BULLETIN BOARD
Transduction Laboratories
Neuroscience
SCIENCE
Building Gene Families
Genome Maps 8


HIV/AIDS News
2013 CME Conferences for Physician Assistants
THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT


SEATEC and Emory
know your numbers
Free Health Screenings for Emory Faculty & Staff
January thru February 2013
Register at: www.hr.emory.edu/screenings
healthy thinking. healthy ACTION. HEALTHY YOU


Study Participants Needed
Fathers Needed for Paid Functional MRI Study
Step UP EMORY
Burn Calories.
Save Time.
Conserve Energy.
Feel Better.
In case of fire
do not use elevators
Use stairways


Cytokine Receptors in Action
CELL ADHESION MOLECULES


UPCOMING CONFERENCES
TALK
THINK
TEST
TREAT


BEFORE YOU TAKE THAT PILL...


The Region with the Most Faces of New AIDS–
The Southeast
South Carolina
Oklahoma
Arkansas
Virginia
District of Columbia
Louisiana
North Carolina
Texas
Alabama
Mississippi
West Virginia
Florida
Tennessee
Georgia
Kentucky
EMORY UNIVERSITY POLICE
Emergency 24-Hours
7-6111 or 911
Non-emergency 24-hour Telephone
7-8005

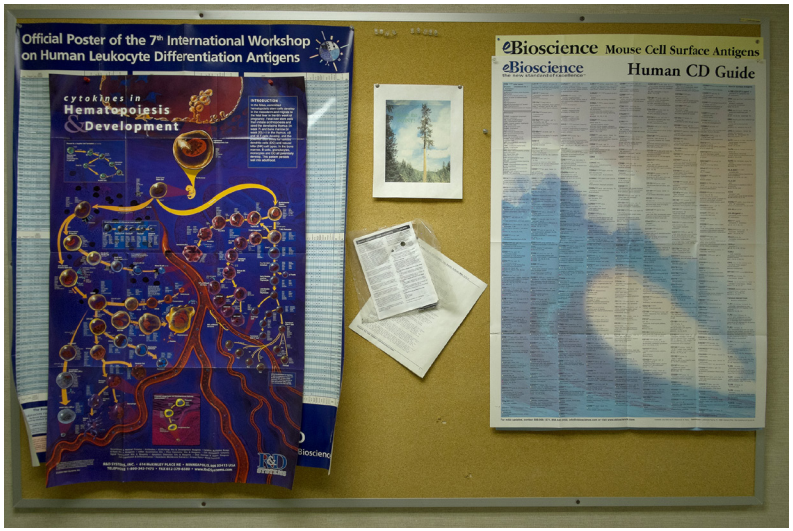

1525, EP & Satellites:
911, then 8-8888**
your feedback is
MUSIC
to our ears
We want to improve—and you can help us.
Child Psychiatry
Med Clinic Patients
seen on Wednesdays
Please check in /check out
in Waiting Room
322 EAST




Community
Resources
Developmental
Pediatric
Specialists

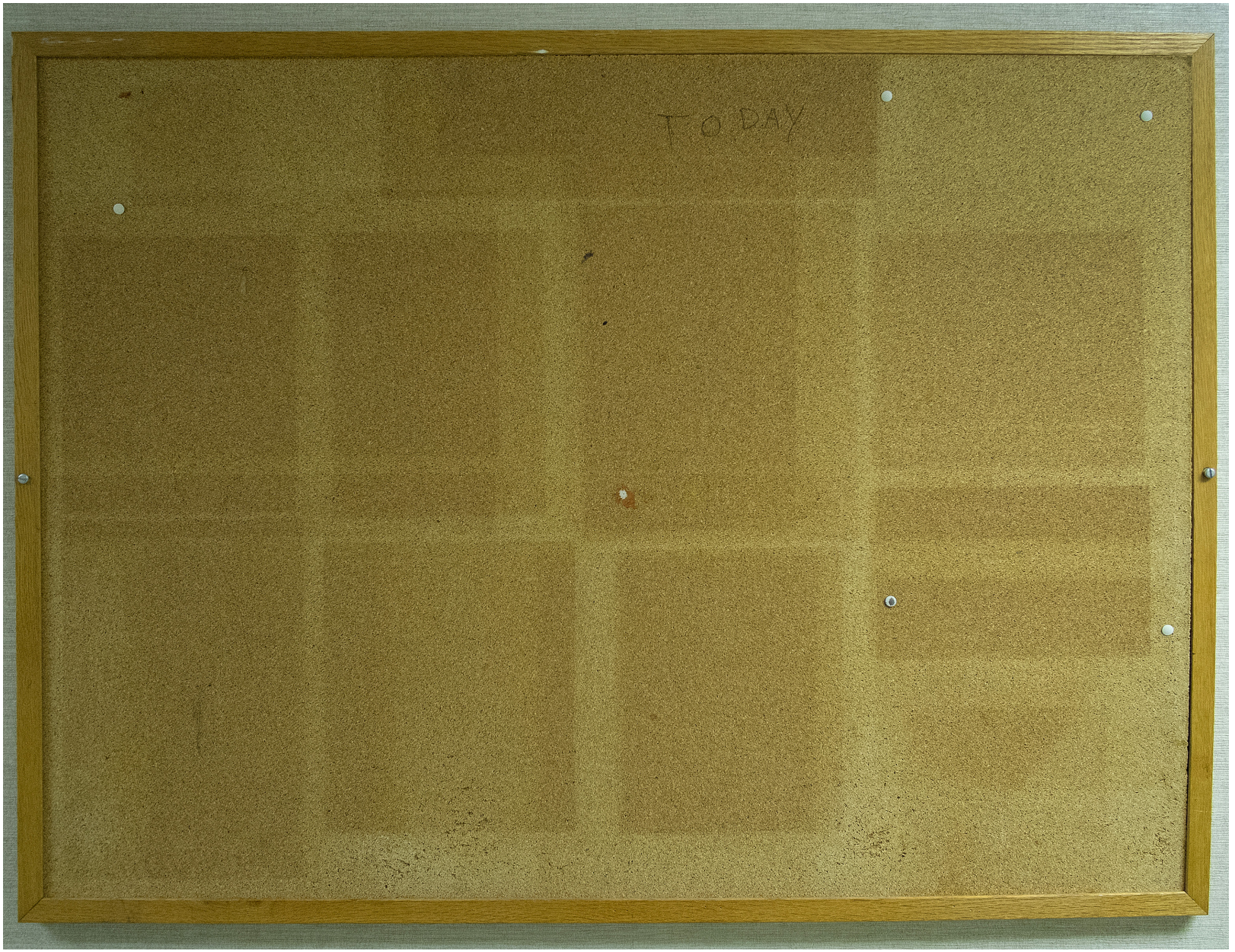

EMORY | WINSHIP CANCER INSTITUTE
Regulatory Affairs Office
Oncology Reporting Office
OnCore
know your numbers
Free Health Screenings
for Emory Faculty & Staff
January thru February 2013
Register at: www.hr.emory.edu/screenings
healthy THINKING...
healthy ACTION...
HEALTHY YOU

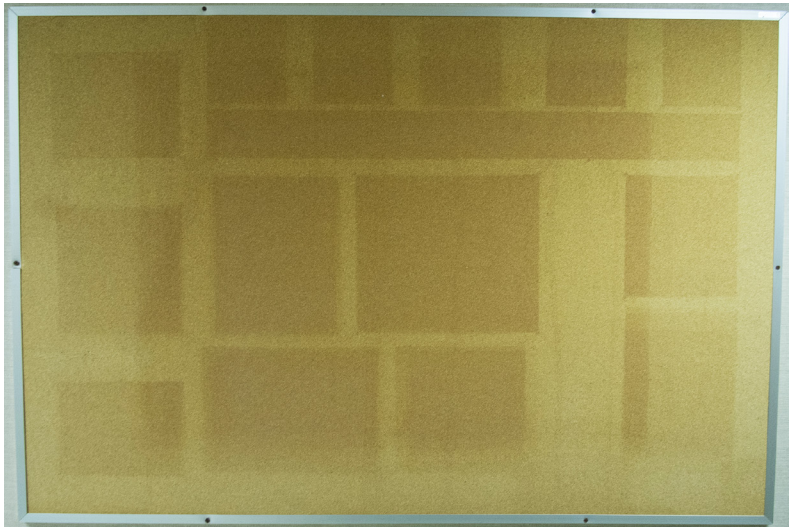

Emory Clinical Neuroscience
301-N
PTSD Research
Fathers Needed for Paid Functional MRI Study

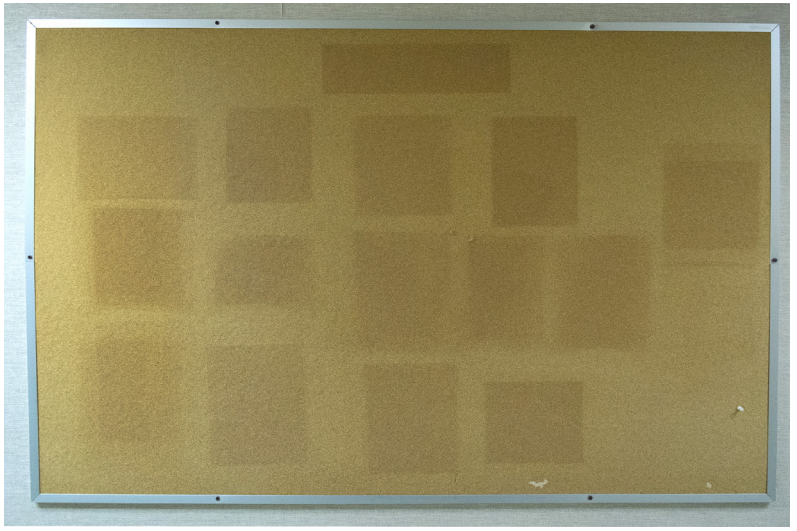

Official Poster of the 7th International Workshop on Human Leukocyte Differentiation Antigens
cytokines in
Hematopoiesis
& Development
eBioscience Mouse Cell Surface Antigens
eBioscience
Human CD Guide


What's the POINT!

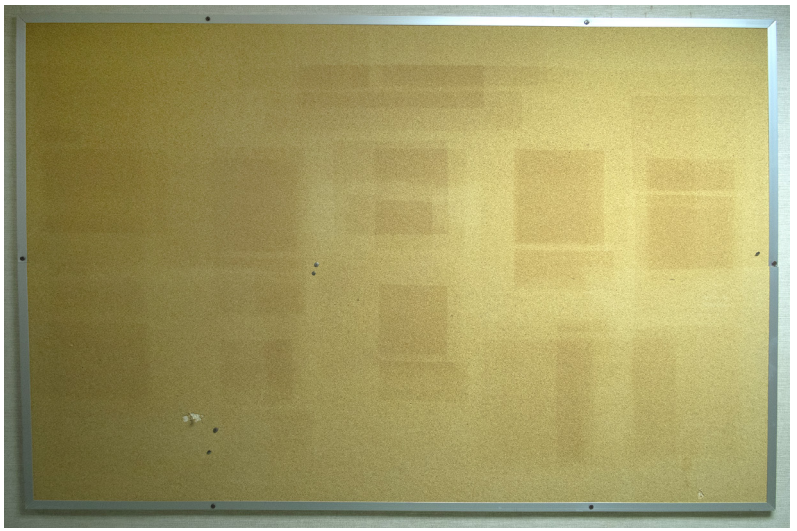

VISUAL ARTS
490
SENIOR
SEMINAR
STUDENTS
MEMOS

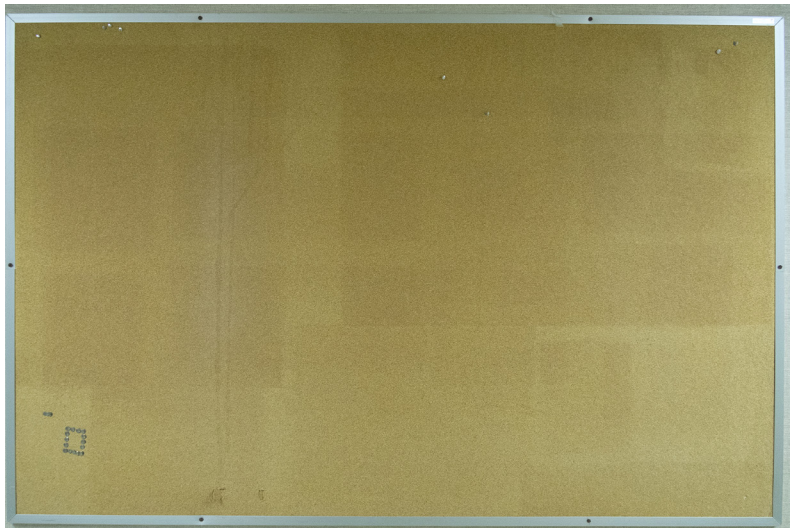

TODAY

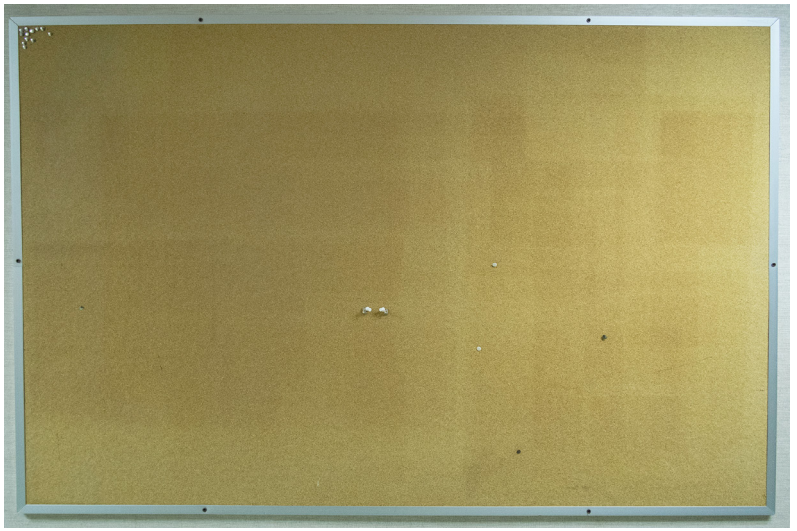

















Upcoming
Events
WallMates
QUARTET

Chapter 1

An Autobiographical Introduction

In the spring semester of 2009 I was a second year PhD student in Emory University's Graduate Division of Religion. It was my last semester of coursework before preparing for comprehensive exams. My area of study was the relationship between a certain philosophical tradition (the apophatic) and queer theory. The questions that occupied my daily studies were questions about how we know what we know and how we use language to describe the limit experiences of our humanity. Just a few months prior my advisor had informed me that he would be leaving Emory for Harvard and while I could go with him to the city, incidentally, from which I moved to work with him, Harvard was going to make me start over. It was enough to make me take inventory of where I wanted to go with my academic career.

Here I was, nearly 30-years old with eight years of graduate studies under my belt, largely dedicated to religious studies and gender studies, and increasingly confident that I wouldn't be directly applying those studies toward a career, in or out of the academy. I considered walking away. My project was rapidly losing its allure. As an attempt at discerning next steps, I spent that spring semester intentionally taking courses outside my discipline – reading German philosophy, a course on experimental scholarly texts, and an independent study in photography.

I was given my first SLR camera as a graduation present from college. Over the several years that followed I took to photography as a beloved hobby. So when the opportunity arose to invest my energies in other outlets, I jumped at the opportunity to backfill my photography education with darkroom techniques.

Photography became a haven. It was an area I could invest a great deal of energy, time, and joy. I had no plans of leaving the religion department, no plans of becoming a photographer (vocationally), no plans of completely changing my direction in the middle of my PhD. I did consider enrolling in an MFA program, and I eventually took graduate courses at the Savannah College of Art and Design, the International Center for Photography, and Georgia State, while also attending two intensive workshops.

Towards the end of that spring semester, I overheard a student in the dark room refer to the "asylum" that Emory owns. She informed me that, yes, Emory owns a large piece of property near main campus that once had an insane asylum on site. It was mid-afternoon and classes were coming to an end, so I filled my pockets with as much film as I could find and headed that way, to a place I soon learned was called the Briarcliff Campus.

Introducing Briarcliff

In 1998, Emory University acquired a 42-acre plot of land – known now as Briarcliff Campus – from the State of Georgia. Situated less than a quarter mile south of North Decatur Rd, on Briarcliff Rd, in the heart of the Druid Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, this land was originally Creek Nation land. With the expulsion of the natives in the 1820s and 1830s, the plot was made available for European settlers. It exchanged hands a few times through the mid-1800s but by the end of the century, it was owned by Asa Candler, the founder of the Coca-Cola Corporation. Candler developed a nationally renowned farming complex that boasted prized poultry and cattle; its electronic and mechanized components made it a premiere facility for the time (early 1900s). Within the

next decade, the farm operation slowed, and Asa sold the property to his son, Asa Candler, Jr.

Over the next few decades, Asa Candler, Jr. moved his growing family to the property and eventually built a massive 30,000 square foot, 22-room mansion. Around it, he would construct prized gardens and greenhouses, both private and public pools, a nine-hole golf course, a commercial laundry, a commercial bottling company that tapped into the artesian wells underneath the property, and a public zoo with lions and elephants to boot. Briarcliff, as it was called, was an extravagant estate.

In 1948, Asa Jr. and his second wife Florence sold the property to the federal government for the development of a veterans hospital. This never materialized. However, the State of Georgia purchased the surplus property from the federal government a few years later (1952) and transformed the mansion into the Georgian Clinic, an addiction treatment center. In the mid-1960s, the State raised the profile of the campus by building the Georgia Mental Health Institute (GMHI) just southwest of the mansion on the same 42-acre plot. It included several outlying wards/dormitories ("cottages") and two large buildings, all connected by underground tunnels. GMHI was designed to treat psychiatric illness, research psychiatric illness, and train psychiatric students to treat and research psychiatric illness. It included sleep labs, a barber shop, gymnasium, jungle gyms for the children's cottage, brain research, and various other labs and programs – all very much more than an “asylum.”

In the late 1990s, with the progressive deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities in the state, Georgia relocated all programs and patients of GMHI offsite and sold the property to Emory for $2.9 million. Emory occupied various parts of GMHI’s

main buildings but left the outlying cottages vacant, due to a significant asbestos presence. The mansion was also abandoned but protected by National Historical Registry privileges. Emory transformed old padded cell-blocks into storage facilities, observational holding rooms into administrative offices. The barbershop and old pharmacy became storage rooms as did the gymnasium. The sense of the place changed but in a lingering, layered, palimpsestic way.

In the summer of 2014, all offices were vacated and relocated off-site; it was simply too expensive to maintain the building. The future of the place remains unsettled.[1] Forty-two acres that are less than a mile from the main campus is a sizable amount of land that Emory will not fully invest in until there is a clear purpose that is worth the tens of millions of dollars it will take to renovate the property.

Photographing Briarcliff

The spring afternoon when I arrived at Briarcliff for the first time was chilly and quiet. The mansion itself was boarded up and because it lay on the front of the property, sneaking (or breaking) in to look around seemed like a poor choice. Besides, there appeared to be much more to discover, especially on the back (western side) of the property.

[1]In early 2015, Emory announced plans to build a library repository on the southwestern most corner of the estate, occupying the place where the children's cottage once stood. However, any further or larger scale developments on the property are not on the immediate horizon. Renovation figures for the entire plate range from the tens of millions to the hundreds of millions.



Figure 1. Brian McGrath Davis, “Briarcliff Mansion”

In the far back (western) section of the property lay three seemingly identical buildings, what could pass for garden level dormitories. Concerned to stay out of sight – there is a frequently patrolling university police cruiser – I ventured to the cover of the backside of one of the cottages. Many large windows had been boarded up in what appeared to be a cat and mouse game between (who I assumed were) neighborhood kids and the facilities crew who would come in after break-ins or vandalism and do their best to board up broken windows, blocking reentry. On the day that I was there, one lone window, the type that runs floor to ceiling, was completely missing, presumably a recent break-in and a veritable back door into the cottage. I didn't think twice about stepping across the jagged glass threshold, but before doing so, I paused, somewhat in awe, to take in the scene before me. Moldy wallpaper was pealing away from the wall in a way that suggested the elements of time and nature; moisture in particular had weighed it down with such damp weight that the old and presumably disintegrating wallpaper adhesive could not keep pace. The texture of mold and mildew on the walls – that distinct splotchy pattern – indicated a break between the built and natural world, a break that was not recent. Ceiling tiles littered the floor with little evidence to suggest they were once actually ceiling tiles; it was the empty ceiling frame that indicated the original purpose of the mess of material that lay strewn and crumbled on the floor. This particular room was a corner room and because of its size and location, and because of the remaining bookshelves on the southernmost wall, I presumed that this was once a doctor's or nurse's office. At any rate, it was a place that was built for a purpose very different from what I saw before me.



Figure 2. Brian McGrath Davis, "Cottage Wall."

I spent a few hours at Briarcliff that day, encountering scene after scene similar to this. It was like a war zone; no other visual referent seems aptly to represent the destruction, abandonment, and apocalyptic entropy I encountered. Certainly I can imagine this image as one made in a Damascus schoolroom or a Fallujah office building as the collateral damage of military combat.

Brief Introduction to Ruin Porn

"Ruin porn" is a neologism that speaks to the images of post-industrial ruins that are voraciously and fetishistically consumed, often in popular publications, as images of beauty, separate from the context of the places photographed. If the popular publications

that frequently post photos of ruins are any indication – *Fast Company*, the *Atlantic*, the *Huffington Post*—the appetite for these images is large and growing. That appetite extends to fine art galleries as well where patrons will pay upwards of $50,000 to put a large framed photograph of an abandoned, disheveled place on their penthouse walls. Something about ruins, especially those of Detroit, the epicenter of ruins photography in America, attracts us.

In a 2009 *Vice* article, "Something, Something, Something Detroit," writer Thomas Mortan addressed the over-production of journalism about Detroit's ruins. "After suffering through the nation's worst and most concentrated examples of racial violence, industrial collapse, serial arson, crack war, and municipal bankruptcy following years of municipal kleptocracy," Mortan writes, "Detroit is being descended on by a plague of reporters."[2] In the years following the Great Recession, reporters and photographers swooped into Detroit, spent a few hours on the ground, got a few key interviews, snapped a few shots of a post-apocalyptic Detroit, then flew back to their respective major city, post the story, and watch site visits break records. In fact, when the UK version of *Vice* ran a series of photographs by Detroit photographer James Griffioen on an abandoned Detroit public school, the entire site's traffic tripled for almost a week after its publication.[3]

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[2]Thomas Mortan, "Something, Something, Something, Detroit," *Vice*, August 1, 2009, accessed July 23, 2015, http://www.vice.com/read/something-something-something-detroit-994-v16n8.

[3]See James Griffioen, "School's Out Forever," *Vice*, February 2, 2009, accessed July 15, 2015, http://www.vice.com/read/schools-out-forever-625-v16n2.It's no surprise that media outlets like Vice – the Atlantic, Fast Company, the Huffington Post and Rolling Stone – continue to produce stories and images of abandoned post-industrial places. If site traffic triples, as it did for the Griffioen *Vice* essay, editorials will continue to push for those stories. There's no chicken-or-egg question here, images of ruins sell, so there are many stories about and essays of the photographs of ruins.

In what might be described as meta-journalism, Mortan himself flew to Detroit in 2009 to meet Griffioen and learn more about this "influx of reporters who don't want anything to do with the city but feel compelled by the time to get a Detroit story under their belts, like it's the journalistic version of cutting a grunge record."[4] Everywhere you turned in popular online media, you could find images of Detroit.[5] Detroit and its abandoned buildings had become the dramatic symbols of a down-turned economy, and the public appetite for consuming images of those derelict buildings couldn't have been more voracious.

During his visit to Detroit, Mortan asked Griffioen to give him a guided tour of popular sites out-of-town photographers frequented. After Griffioen's record-breaking *Vice* article, he became a default aficionado of Detroit's ruins, or at least the popularly-photographed ones. He would receive up to five calls a week from journalists who wanted him to show them around Detroit. "At first," Griffioen recalls, "you're really flattered by it, like, 'Whoa, these professional guys are interested in what I have to say and show them.' But you get worn down trying to show them all the different sides of the city, then watching them go back and write the same story as everyone else," adding that "the photographers are the worst. Basically the only thing they're interested in shooting is ruin porn."[6] With that (probably off-handed) comment, Griffioen coined the term "ruin porn," the term now used to describe the fetishization of pictures of ruined buildings, devoid of the context that brought about their ruin.

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[4]Mortan.
[5]Mortan notes that in July 2009 alone the Packard Auto Plant was used by "the *New York Times*, the British *Daily Mirror*, and the Polish *Auto Motor* as a visual for stories it has no concrete connection to other than occupying the same city."
[6]Mortan.

Jim Griffioen

Jim Griffioen is an interesting person to have coined "ruin porn" as a critical response to the effusive production and consumption of ruin photography, especially since he is a ruin photographer himself. Griffioen is a former lawyer and now stay-at-home father who lives in Detroit with his daughter and wife and writes for his blog "Sweet Juniper!"[7] "Sweet Juniper!" is a blog about Griffioen's daily life as a father, husband, and inhabitant of a largely blighted Detroit.

As a second-career blogger—his wife is a lawyer and appears to be the breadwinner—Griffioen seems to have naturally picked up photography as a way of sharing his life as a stay-at-home dad in Detroit. Many of the posts on his blog include photographs from areas in Detroit near his home, and many of the images are his explorations of Detroit's ruins. Presumably this is what qualified him to be the de facto ruins tour guide for out-of-town reporters and photographers. Each of the blog posts that have ruins photos include descriptions of his experience in the particular place and whatever relevant history he can uncover through cursory internet searches. While Griffioen does sell these images, his modus operandi is to offer as much context as possible when surfacing the images on his blog. He very decidedly does not identify with ruin porn.

Taking an interest in how this term, ruin porn, was coined and what it *is* and *isn't* – that is, how do we define ruin porn, and what is the different between ruin photography and ruin porn? – I contacted Griffioen to hear his perspective. If the man coined the term, he must have something to say. Add to that the fact that he now has a second act as a ruins photographer, speaker, and writer – you can purchase photographs of ruins from

[7]Jim Griffioen, Sweet Juniper!, http://www.sweet-juniper.com (accessed August 23, 2015).

his photography website, which is separate from his blog – and I expected the conversation to be informative, especially around these central few questions: Why do we like to look at images of ruins? What makes something ruin *porn*?

Below is the unedited email correspondence between Griffioen and myself.[8] This dialogue helps to sort out the contested nature of several of the threads that weave in and out of this dissertation. I use this correspondence to give an introduction to the sort of questions and issues that persist throughout the project.

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Correspondence One.

Jim,

I'm writing a dissertation on why we like to look at ruins, we being all of us, ruins being the exploited sites, like Detroit, photographers have been drawn to more ardently in the past decade.

I have your Vice quote, the one in which you're essentially given credit for coining the term "ruin porn," and as I was preparing my notes today I thought I'd take a look around your blog.

I have to admit, I was surprised to find what I would call "ruin porn" photographs. I guess in my naive mind, you'd be a guy who hates/eschews the genre. And to be clear I have no value to place on either loving or hating photographs of ruins; I think, in a way, we're all drawn to them, and that draw is what's curious to me.

Anyway, discovering photos of dereliction on your own blog raised a new question about which I think you'd have a unique perspective: What do the place and the geographical surrounding of a ruined place play on the porn-ing of a ruin? Meaning: is ruin porn what happens when an outsider comes in, consumes imagery apart from the full narrative, and then escapes to enjoy the ruins of another's neighborhood? Is the ethical dilemma at hand that outsiders (or neighbors too) take ruins away from their context? And does that mean that if the ruin is on your block, in your neighborhood, it is less likely to fall in the realm of 'porn', as long as the imager isn't separated from the narrative?

I realize these are pedantic questions. But I'm really curious about what makes the moniker "porn" kick in. When does it kick in? Who does it not apply to? How have your thoughts about this changed over the years?

[8]My email correspondence with Jim Griffioen occurred from April 20 to April 24, 2015.

Jim, I'd love to hear your thoughts about this, but I know you're a busy guy. So thanks in advance for any thoughts you may have.
Best,
Brian McGrath Davis[9]

[Griffioen's Reply:]

Brian I was never intentionally a photographer but considered myself a writer and a resident of Detroit looking to tell the story of what was happening here and I used a digital camera to illustrate what no words could convey. The city is in ruins and to deny or hide it is a more nefarious lie than focusing only on ruins. I refused to be a part of the lie that many Detroit photographers have fallen into, "hope porn" or "positivity porn" if you will. photos of smiling black kids on a swing or some black guy with a crazy bike make people around here feel better but they are just one part of a very complicated, multifaceted story that includes ruins. everywhere.

I really don't feel the need to defend my pictures to some random internet grad student but if you're interested in a more in-depth discussion than was in the vice piece look here: http://www.artnews.com/2013/02/06/the-debate-over-ruin-porn/

Pornography is as much about how it is consumed as how it is created. These NYC guys were creating images identical to ones that 5,000 CCS photo students have made for 30 years and selling them to Time magazine and the photos were being viewed online with lascivious glee on sites like reddit and boing boing etc. with dumb ass comments: "we should buy the whole city and turn it into a paintball playground" or "cool for zombie apocalypse LARPing" etc. These NYC guys were taking pictures of the train station with $100,000 worth of camera equipment (the current owner of the building paid that much in like 1997) and then selling decontextualized wall-sized prints to rich Manhattan assholes in Chelsea galleries for $10,000 a pop. Porn.

I tell my story. A bunch of dumb motherfuckers around here see any picture of a ruined building and call it ruin porn. Whatever. This is where I live. Consider what Potter Stewart said about porn and rethink putting my work into that category.

jdg[10]

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It's not difficult to understand Griffioen's response to moving to a place like Detroit – becoming a storyteller. Was his new home – he and his wife moved from California – the impetus for starting his storytelling career as a blogger, or was it the fact that he was transitioning from being a lawyer to being a stay-at-home dad? In either case, he took up storytelling and presumably began exploring his neighborhood. As an outsider, perhaps he was primed to witness the blight of Detroit in a way that longtime

[9]Email message from author to Jim Griffioen, April 20, 2015.
[10]Email message to author from Jim Griffioen, April 21, 2015.

locals, accustomed to the scene, were unable. What visual access does stranger status grant a person viewing ruins?

Of all the ways he could have responded to my note, he begins, "I was never intentionally a photographer." Photography became an unexpected necessity for creating the sort of story Griffioen wanted to tell, "to illustrate what no words could convey." The digital camera became a tool for doing what Griffioen felt words could not. The camera provide context and proof.

As it concerns Detroit – really any scene of mass ruin – the idea of turning to images as the more apt (or final) witnesses, the sort of expert witnesses that confirm what many words strain to express, is a double-edged sword. On one hand, images are capable of representing scenes in the world in such a way that can be immediately convincing. At the same time, with a proliferation of those images, let's say of Detroit, the words can start to lose their impact as the impression of the images begins to take center stage. As a result, a complicated story like that of Detroit's half-century fall from capitalist grace, gets reduced to post-apocalyptic images of modern ruins. The images always travel faster (than text) in our digital world and can almost immediately lose the breadth of context in which they were made.

Griffioen's choice of photography as a witness, supplemental to his words, was a choice to step into the middle of this problem: images *can* do work that words alone cannot, but images can also superseded and elide the context (the words) from which they were made. This is, of course, the purpose of pornography and the main criticism levied against ruin porn.

Griffioen's initial comments seem very sympathetic to the photography or ruins, even ruin porn. "The city is in ruins and to deny or hide it is a more nefarious lie than focusing only on ruins," he writes. Griffioen believes that images of Detroit's ruins are important to both make and see, because they are witnesses to a devastation that cannot be glossed over or ignored. In fact, to tell the counter-narrative is worse than over-emphasizing or only emphasizing the ruins. Given the choice of showing only images of smiling children in Detroit or showing only images of Detroit's ruins, Griffioen would prefer the images of ruins, as perhaps the lesser of two evils.

Actually, it's difficult to know what Griffioen would prefer, especially given his confrontational disposition. Is he an angry person in general? A privileged inhabitant of a unique part of the world? A morally superior martyr? Is he exhausted from conversations about ruin porn? Does he presume me, "some random internet grad student," to be ignorant of the history or ruins, Detroit's full story, a cultural relative of the swanky New York photographer he so despises? And if any of these are true, why engage with me over email in the first place? Ego? A conviction that Detroit's story is one he must tell even if his happenstance interlocutor is not one he would have chosen? Does Griffioen, as blogger, photographer, and witness to and resident near Detroit's ruins feel compelled to share his perspective to any willing audience?

Audience is important to Griffioen, not only because his livelihood – which is a tricky word because I'm not confident the lights at the Griffioen house stay on because of his writing or photography – depends on having readers and viewers, but because his disdain for ruin porn is at least partially the result of the way the images are received, and more importantly disrespected. Griffioen is quick to point out that "pornography is as

much about how it is consumed as how it is created." To him, the problem of ruin porn, and presumably what distinguishes ruin porn from ruin photography, is that ruin porn is made by photographers who include all or some of the following qualifications: ultimately disinterested, non-resident, privileged fine art photographer, photographers who often divorce the images from their full context when presenting them. At the same time, Griffioen recognizes that ruin porn is consumed by ultimately disinterested viewers who, by apathy or ignorance or by the divestment of context from the images, by the photographer or the media of their publication (e.g., online, book, gallery), value the images *only* for the immediate gratification they provide. Griffioen hasn't a modicum of appreciation for the viewer of a Detroit ruins photo who appreciates the image for how it depicts landscapes that are used or consumed as scenes of entertainment.

Ruin porn photographers, according to Griffioen, are likely to be disinterested in the full story of the scenes they photograph and disinterested in conscientiously drawing attention to or, better, alleviating the suffering associated with those scenes. Rather, ruin porn photographers, at least some, are *very* interested in and motivated by literally capitalizing on decontextualized images of ruins. Griffieon seems begrudgingly preoccupied both with certain photographers' privilege of access to expensive camera gear as well as the potentially disinterested access of wealthy buyers who consume said photographers' images. So it's worth noting that the presumption of privilege and access – to scenes of ruin, to wealth – are concerns of Griffioen's that directly impinge on how he distinguishes ruin photography from ruin porn.

Concerned Photography

Mid-twentieth century documentary photographer, Cornell Capa, used the title "concerned photographer" to describe the sort of photographer who wanted to do more with her images than just describe.[11] Concerned photographers created images with the hope that they would have some greater impact than simply describing the scene in front of the camera. Griffioen's definition of ruin porn, as it develops through our correspondence, includes disinterested photographers, those who have an indifferent, rather than concerned, approach to the places they photograph. This would presumably place Griffioen in the concerned photography camp. Provisionally, then, ruin porn, might be described as the opposite of concerned photography; something like "indifferent photography" seems to capture Griffioen's concern.

I believe Griffioen would identify himself as a concerned photographer, and because his definition of ruin porn is the opposite of that, rehearsing the brief history of concerned photography seems prudent. Historians typically point to Jacob Riis's work in the late 19th century (*How the Other Half Lives*) and sociologist Lewis Hine's work in the early 20th century (for the National Child Labor Committee) as the first prominent socially concerned documentary photographers.[12] Both men cared about their subject matter – Riis regarding the welfare of the inhabitants of New York's slums and Hine regarding the welfare of America's child labor force – and both men used their images to draw attention to a socio-political problem that concerned them. As Brett Abbott writes in his *Engaged Observers*, both men bear "witness to a problem with the intention of

[11]See Cornell Capa, ed., *The Concerned Photographer* (New York: Grossman, 1968).
[12]See Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890); see also, for example, Lewis Hine, *Child Work in the Home: What it is, What it Should Be* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1918).

reversing it."[13] Riis and Hine proved that carefully documented images, along with their associated context, campaigns, writing, and legislation could effect change.

Photography began to have a prominent role in widely circulated print magazines in the 1930s. When *Life* magazine was first published in 1936, publisher Henry Luce's goal was to empower photographs (and sequences of photographs) to function as more than just the images that illustrate written text. In a 1937 *Life* article titled "The Camera as Essayist," Luce penned an ad of sorts that read:

> As *Life* has learned in its first few months, the camera is not merely a reporter. It can also be a commentator. It can comment as it reports. It can interpret as it presents. It can picture the world as a seventeenth-century essayist or a twentieth-century columnist would picture it."[14]

Abbott explains, "Luce pushed the idea that a photographer could express a personal visual approach to the world and advance an opinion, or argument, about his [sic] subjects."[15] For that reason, photo essays became a central focus of the magazine and this sort of socially conscientious photography was given precedence through it.

"In the decades following World War II, a concerned, independently minded, and critically engaged form of photography began to gather momentum," explains Abbott; "it was a self-assigned form of reporting that tackled big-picture problems in a nuanced and evocative fashion, building up arguments through series of images made over long periods of time and from an informed experiential point of view."[16] What emerged during the first half of the 20th century was what Cornell Capa would eventually call "concerned photography."

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[13]Brett Abbott, *Engaged Observers: Documentary Photography Since the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010), 4.
[14]Henry Luce, "The Camera as Essayist," *Life* 2, no. 17 (April 26, 1937): 60–61.
[15]Abbott, 2.
[16]Abbott, 1.

I won't give Griffioen the credit of being aware of this history of socially conscientious photography, but I do think he sees himself in this tradition. In the very least, it seems obvious that he very highly regards this approach to photography, at least as it concerns photographs of Detroit, at least as it concerns *his* photographs of Detroit. Who knows what he thinks of images of ruins and abandonment form other places, far away from his neighborhood in Michigan. It's plausible that Griffioen's commitment to this issue and his view of ruins, ruins photography, and ruin porn is solely limited to his experience of living in Detroit, meaning, it might be granting to much credit to his perspective to assume that he is making a stance about the role of documentary photography in general. In fact, while this guy essentially coined the term "ruin porn," it's entirely probable that he's really only talking about his very narrow perspective as a photographer and his own experience in his Detroit neighborhood. All that notwithstanding, it doesn't excuse the core criticism of ruin porn – that it is a disengaged form of photography that decontextualizes or elides the circumstances of disastrous contemporary scenes while at the same time fetishizing the decay and disaster therein.

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Correspondence Two

[Author's reply, April 21, 2015:]
Jim,

Thank you for these thoughts and for taking the time to mention them. Clearly, you owe this random internet grad student nothing, so I appreciate your taking the time, really.

I think you were right to call me out on my associating the term "porn" with the photos you posted; the application of that term completely depends on who is photographing, what their relationship to the scene is, and how the photo will be consumed. I think the use of "porn" for this, or for food, disasters, the climate — any porn neologism, really — is an interesting cultural phenomenon. At any rate, you've

driven home the point that the photographer's story — who they are in relation to their scene and in relation to their audience — is everything when it comes to ruins photography. But there is still the tropes of the ruin porn photograph: muted colors, dereliction, industrial space, nature overtaking the built environment, the absence of people, open space.

My own dissertation research is about a particular site in Atlanta which has been a palimpsest for over a century — in the late 19th c it was an industrial farm, then an aristocratic estate, then a theme park of sorts (public zoo and pool), then a mental health facility, and then higher education. Now it's empty. I've been consumed with understanding this place, the people that lived and worked there, telling their and its story.

Somewhere along the line, I realized that my photographs were all very dramatic, emotive, and frankly ruin porn. The beauty of the decay was taking center stage when the story of the place was what I was after. That awareness created a new attention in my study: why do we like to look at ruins? And the answer "Because it's beautiful!" doesn't quite cut it — there's something more, something about the struggle against time, or the visual presence of death, or the struggle between nature and nurture, or a ruin's evocative nature, the way that it begs the question, "What happened here?" Or maybe it's just the taboo fascination of peering into a scene where you know you're not supposed to be.

I'm not being clear about it, but I'm trying to say that I appreciate (and agree!) with your perspective.

And while you're perhaps rightly defensive about your images, you've made images nonetheless that could be mistaken for ruin porn. Outside of the context of who you are, these images will speak to most anyone as ruin porn. Because images always travel and are consumed as images first, second as images in context.

I'm not trying to call you out — I really don't care. I'm more interested in what you see in these images, because I gather that you don't see your perspective on ruin porn and your photos to be in tension. It seems clear to me that because you live in Detroit and because you have a very particular view of this genre of photography, your images are exempt from the porn moniker. Am I right?

One could argue that by moving to Detroit and creating this body of work, you're actually the ruin pornographer *par excellence*, regardless of whether you intended to or not.

Jim, I'm not trying to offend. I see a tension here and I'm very curious how you negotiate it, especially when you sell your images.

What do these images mean to you? Seriously — what are you doing with these images? Is it documenting the astonishment? I don't think the defense of not intending to be a photographer makes you any less of one, and I don't presume that you do either.

This image, for example — the presumption is that it is "ruin porn."[17] It carries all the signals. But knowing your story and having been slightly upbraided in the process of gathering it, I know you don't see this as ruin porn.[18]

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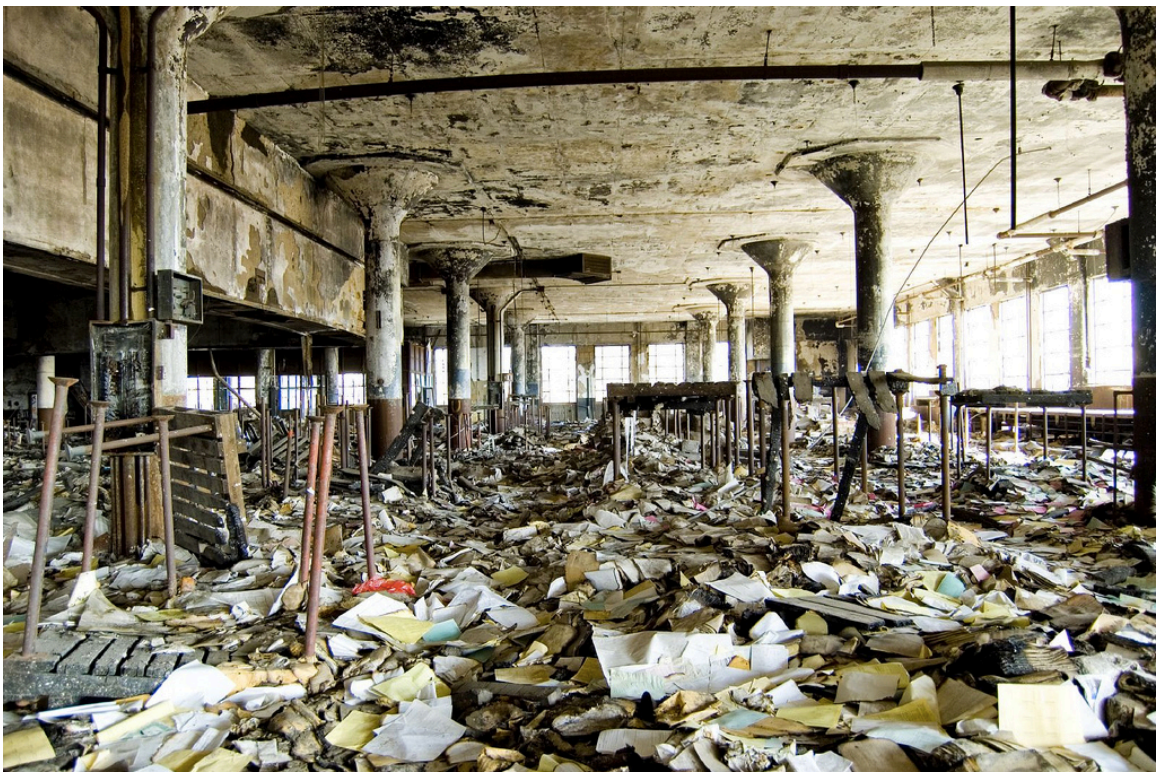
[17]The pasted photograph (below) included in the correspondence, "untitled one," is a screenshot taken from Griffioen's photography website. It is available at http://www.jamesgriffioen.net/index.php?/projects/untitled-one/.

[18]See email message from Jim Griffioen to author on, April 21, 2015 (above).



So perhaps you see my dilemma: I see ruin porn in this image. It's all I see. And while I don't think I'm one of the "bunch of dumb motherfuckers" who see an image of an abandoned space and automatically call it porn, how are the images on your photo site, different from the bougie NYC photogs who roll into town with more expensive equipment and sell their images at a higher price tag? Is it that they are outsiders?

You can see that I'm full of questions.

Thoughts?

-B[19]

[Griffioen's reply, April 24, 2105:]

Absolutely many of the pictures I've taken can be consumed in the same manner as ruin porn. This is what has always irked me. The picture you identified has been copied, LITERALLY copied dozens if not hundreds of times by people with no interest in the subject matter other than taking pictures of crazy shit they can sell for big bucks somewhere else (Andrew Moore made identical pictures to ones I had made years earlier, and he's the worst offender). The thing is, I discovered those books on my own while walking my dog. I came back with a camera. I researched and wrote about what I saw because I am a parent in Detroit and this is the school system where I am supposed to send my children. There is something to be said about this image beyond "fucking whoa, dude." Which is primarily how ruin porn is consumed.

Again, ruin porn is about consumption as much as creation.

Forget who I am and where I live, I have ALWAYS made an effort to make it about something more than the image. For me the documentation of Detroit is a political

[19]Email message from author to Jim Griffioen, April 21, 2015.

act, it is saying: here is proof of how little we think of our poor people. This is how much America cares about black people. Here are the scars and the stains on the landscape that people see here day in and day out. this great american city is fucking disappearing. this is a part of my life here. this is a part of my children's lives. I am a writer and I write about that. Ruin porn as a critique was when people saw the documentation and said, "hey I can do that with a better camera and make money from it." that is exploitation. and from an artistic standpoint, ruin porn is lazy. unoriginal. completely cliched. I am not a professional artist so I can say that honestly. this shit aint high art. it's the first thing first year photography students gravitate to. a ruined building evokes so much without requiring anything of the photographer. you dont have to ask its permission. you don't have to worry about it shooting you back.

if you go through my portfolio you see I have a very distinct POV. There are ruins in some of my pictures but I am not just here to document "them all." I am interested in nature. I grew up in the country and I am interested in the way Detroit looks more like my memories of childhood than my own childhood home, overrun now by big box stores and strip malls and the very sort of cheap housing that was built in Detroit 80 years ago and is now falling apart and getting taken over by trees. people can looks at my pictures and scream ruin porn all they want, and some can even consume it as such, but for me it is about documenting the truth of the world where I have chosen to raise my family, a world that most Americans can't even imagine.

I don't think the photographers deserve all the criticism when it comes to ruin porn---it's the audience too--- the casual consumer who sees it and says holy shit wow but then doesn't think any more about. they're as much of if not more of a problem.

jdg[20]

[Author's reply, April 24, 2015:]
jim,

These are interesting thoughts about a complicated matter. Thank you for this dialogue.

Context doesn't necessarily travel with images; in fact, it never travels with images. Images travel with the visual referent alone and even when captions or titles are given to them, the visuality of the image itself always wins. People forget the words, remember the images.

One of the most interesting things to me about ruin porn is that it is (or can be when wielded aptly) a direct commentary on capitalism — not the backside or shadow of capitalism; it is capitalism *par excellence*. What's unmistakably ironic is the fact that the "Andrew Moores" of the world may actually care about Detroit. They may actually care about the city and the people; certainly his outsider status, his access to expensive professional camera equipment, and his access to clientele that will pay thousands of dollars for images don't negate those possibilities. But if I presume that his images of Detroit are a commentary on the failures of capitalism — or maybe it's the *success* of capitalism, what happens when capitalism is most successful — then what's maddeningly ironic is that the only people that can afford to purchase his images, which are evidence

[20]Email message from Jim Griffioen to author, April 24, 2015.

of late capitalism's destructiveness, are the very people who make that capitalism happen. The only pockets deep enough to purchase a Vergara or Polidori or Moore image are the same people, likely, who are the key players in the industries that brought blight to Detroit. They are the capitalists of the capitalists who spend thousands of dollars to consume images that directly show how their capitalism destroys. Maybe that's the conglomeration of too many assumptions, but I think there's something there.

The trouble with images — and let's take your book image, the one I referred to, for instance — is that they travel so quickly and the authorial intent gets left behind, until that is, it arrives on the democratic space of the web where images become sorted by categories. I think it's something inherent to visuality and the way photographs are organized online. My images, your images, a first year photo student's images, Andrew Moore's images all enter into the theater of democratic categorization, regardless of what their respective photographers may have intended.

From a photographer's stand point, ruin porn is not far form photographs of sunsets or a National Geographic photo of a rare toad — the images succeed not because of the photographer's prowess but because the content of the image is stunning. The other interesting aspect of Andrew Moore's images, for example, are most successful when he becomes the smallest factor. If we think his images are amazingly beautiful, sure it's because he's skilled with a view camera and is the son of an architect, but it's really the scene before him that has already done all the work. As you say: a ruined building evokes so much without requiring anything of the photographer. The masterpiece happens in the piece, not the master. When I realized this about my own work, that's when I started to change how I photographed. I didn't want to photograph easy things like dilapidated buildings, babies, sunsets, or landscapes. I wanted my photographs to succeed because I saw something that someone else wouldn't — that I saw visual rhyming, a covert critique, a story that needed to be told. I'm not sure this is making sense, but we are definitely on the same page when you say that "ruin porn is lazy."

But again, it comes back to consumption. Why do you think there is such an appetite for this now? Why do you think ruins are beautiful? Is it because it is unordered space? Because it's the wild west of post-industrial America? Because it's unsanitized, taboo, masochistically delightful? Nobody *likes* a ruin porn image because of it's critique of capitalism. They are beautiful in and of themselves, apart form any political argument. The real question in all of this — at least about the genre "ruin porn" — is *why* it is consumed with such fervor. Who are we that we delight in these images? What does it say about our culture? Our fears? Our desires? Why can I not go a week without seeing a new ruin porn piece from either Slate, WIRED, the Atlantic, Fast Co, or the Huffington Post?

What do you see in these images? I don't think an answer of "this is my children's school system" is an answer. You say it's political and I know you write and speak about what you see in Detroit. But when you look at the images that you make — I recall one in the same book room with a small tree emerging — do the images bring you pleasure? They must, in some way, even if the pleasure is the satisfaction of having gathered more evidence for your concern. And I'm really not out to trap you or anything, I'm just trying to get your perspective here.

Ultimately, there are a handful of factors at play here: the scenes themselves (today), the (absent) people who experienced this scene at one point, the conditions that

formed the scenes (as they are now), the photographers, the images of the scenes made by the photographers, and the audience of those images. Can images — on their own! — do anything in regards to an argument against what I'm labeling as the conditions of the ruined scene? Or, are the images beholden to the categories of consumption, one of which being ruin porn?

Too man questions. I'm curious and you're a candid interlocutor.

As a side note (and final thought), it occurred to me last night, while far down the trail of research, that there is one image that ever adult American (with very very few and unique exceptions) carries with them: the image, still or moving, of the Twin Towers coming down. It's now a marker of what it means to be an American, that image. It's not for me to decide how it marks being an American, but it is a ruin, nonetheless, and one that we all carry with us. No other scene of the past 50 years can claim that title. It's speculative to do anything with that information, but in the very least it says that being an American, maybe being patriotic, has something to do with knowledge of or reverence for that scene. I'm not saying that's why ruin porn is so hot right now — it's been hot for centuries. I just recognize it as an important part of what it means to be American. And frankly what happened to the Twin Tower and what happened to Detroit are just stridently different expressions of the same thing — the consequences of an imperialistic form of capitalism.

Thanks again for sharing your thoughts — I'm curious to hear what you have to say.
-b[21]

[Griffioen never replied.]

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An important issue is raised in this (last) set of exchanges: images do not travel with their context; they do not necessarily travel with captions; even on the digital landscape, metadata does not adhere to each image. When a photograph is made of a place it begins its abandonment of that place, meaning that only when the shutter is open is there a mimetic representational relationship between what appears in the world before the camera and what is recorded by the camera. From that point forward, though they were never bound, they are forever moving apart.

When Griffioen offhandedly coined the term "ruin porn," he did so with contempt for images of Detroit that are celebrated as being beautiful or thrilling rather than

[21]Email message from author to Jim Griffioen, April 24, 2015.

contextualized as sites of economic and socio-political disarray.[22] He notes that "ruin porn is about consumption as much as creation," so the responsibility lies both with the image maker and the image consumer, but even Griffioen himself cannot prevent his images of ruin from being interpreted as that which he despises the most, porn.

Ruin porn is a term coined by Griffioen, and while that doesn't make him the expert on the subject, it is insightful to see how a concerned photographer such as himself understands the problems of ruin porn. To Griffioen, photographically trading in the fetishization of ruins is lazy work; the scenes of apocalyptic ruin lend themselves naturally to dramatic images, and are not difficult to make. At the same time, sharing the image alone, apart form its context, is an inadequate representation of the place, which is littered with narrative ready to be mined. Griffioen's criticism of ruin porn assumes that the photography of place requires more than showing up, snapping a few frames, and walking away.

More Than Just Photographs, Course of Chapters

From 2009 to 2015, I returned to Briarcliff dozens of times, every time with my camera. During that same spring semester in 2009, I was also thinking about the Briarcliff Campus during my Experimental Texts class. For the class project I created a document of images and autobiographical text. As I photographed, I wrote about the experience of feeling lost in my own vocational journey, a sort of first-person writing that was new to me as an academic. With my advisor leaving for Harvard and my academic

[22]Griffioen writes, "For me the documentation of Detroit is a political act, it is saying: here is proof of how little we think of our poor people. This is how much America cares about black people. Here are the scars and the stains on the landscape that people see here day in and day out. this great american city is fucking disappearing."

future seemingly now mostly a past, I somehow felt an affective connection with Briarcliff, such that being there felt very comfortable, comfort*ing* even. For hours I would be locked in the mansion – because of security precautions – and while many people I spoke to describe the place as spooky or haunted or scary, I found solace there. Here was an abandoned building and a fellow walking around with his own sense of abandonment, trying to understand both with his camera.

That affective connection fueled an interest that grew into a curiosity not only about the complete history of Briarcliff but also about the photography of place, the affective qualities certain places seem to emit, and why we respond (usually favorably) to images of ruin. The last piece of that curiosity – regarding why we like to look at images of ruin – was a late development that came not only from consistent positive reception of my work, but by witness the continual proliferation of images of ruin, both in popular media and fine art. What is it about Briarcliff that attracted me? How have photographers traditionally negotiated places of ruin? And what is it about photographs of ruins in general that are visually alluring? These were the foundational questions that fueled my research.

In what follows, I've taken a decidedly interdisciplinary approach to addressing these questions. In the opening (written) chapter, I give an overview of the full (known) history of Briarcliff, from the moment it exists as a parcel of land within the State of Georgia through today. Much of that history is telling the story of Asa Candler, Jr., the man who turned the 42-acre campus into an aristocratic estate. The second chapter treats the attendant questions regarding the photography of place by looking closely at Robert

Polidori's *After the Flood* and place scholar Yi-Fu Tuan's unique approach to theorizing place.

In the third written chapter, I ask the question: Why do we like to look at ruin porn, the type of photography that eschews all context on behalf of fetishizing the images of post-industrial ruins? It's a complicated question that requires an interdisciplinary approach which invites input from several disciplines: history, photography, psychology, place studies, ruin studies, art history, and disabilities studies, among others. This is a dissertation about Briarcliff, but it's a dissertation about Briarcliff insofar as it's the place I've photographed and insofar as those images have bumped up against questions about the photography of place and the recent phenomenon of ruin porn. So, the ruin porn chapter is an important piece *not* just because it attempts to help answer the question of why we like to look at images of ruins, but also because it situates the images and story of Briarcliff. These three chapters do the heavy lifting of addressing the questions that fuel this project. The conclusion reassembles the various threads that weave in and out of the entire project.

A Word about Photographs

This project began with pictures and the dissertation's format mirrors that, presenting photographs as visual literature, equivalent in value to the written text. By surrounding the text with photographic sequences, the photographs gain a more informed and critical legibility, not only about the photography of place and the photography of ruins, but about Briarcliff in particular. These images form a complementary narrative to the written chapters.

The first sequence is a series of bulletin boards found in the hallways of GMHI Building A. I'm curious about how the bulletin boards' contents and the absence of content inform an understanding of this place. The second sequence is dedicated to an exploration of the mansion as it persists today. The third sequence treats the pool grounds. The fourth sequence takes a look inside the GMHI cottages. The fifth sequence walks the halls of GMHI Building A. The final sequence function as a view of Briarcliff if you were to walk the grounds today, paying special attention to the way the different historical layers of Briarcliff persist in the frame. In each of these sequences, the viewer is invited to explorer the scene as a palimpsest of the many moments that occurred at Briarcliff.






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AMODINE








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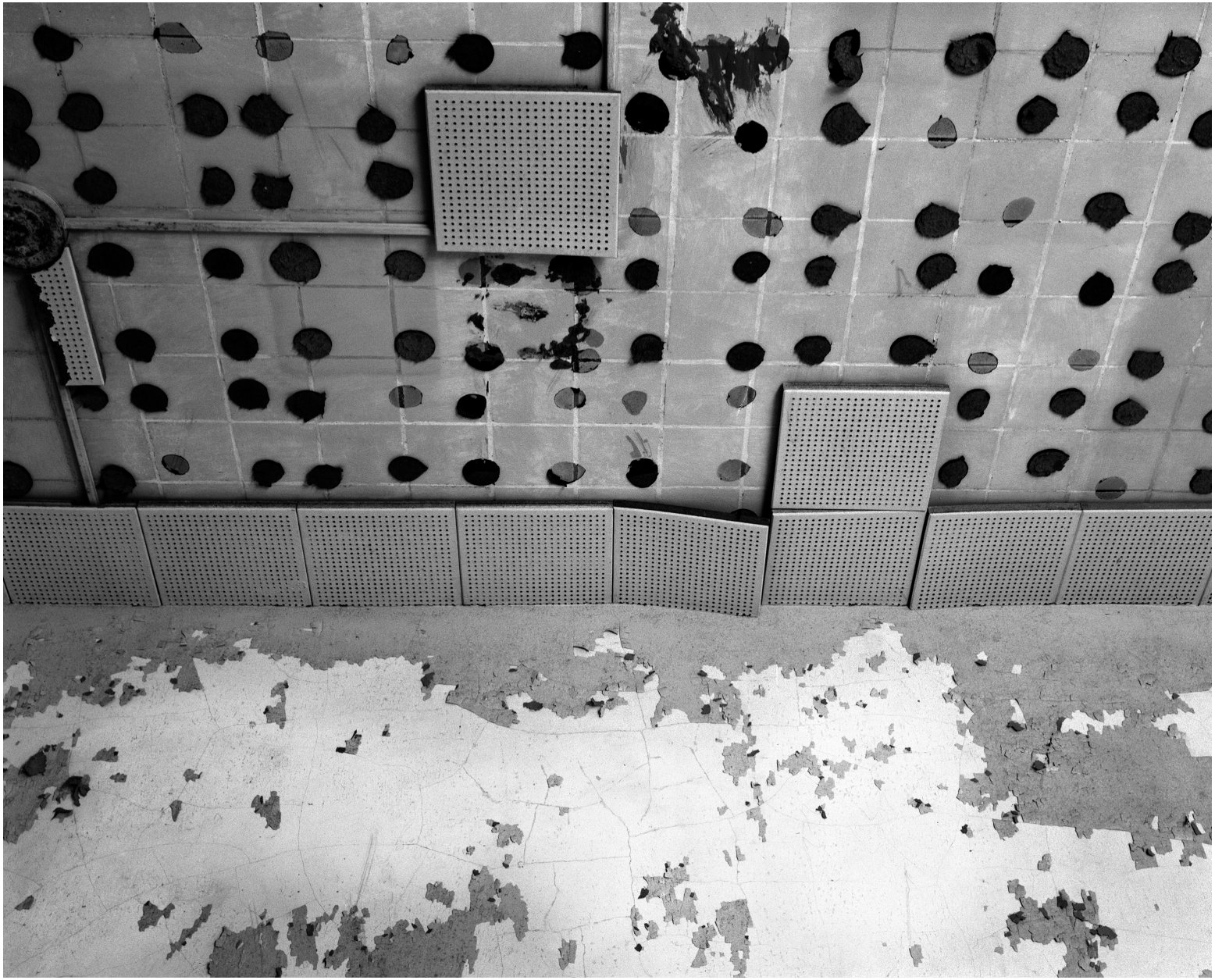












COTTAGE
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TIME




Briarcliff RD

Chapter 2

A Brief History of Briarcliff

Before "Briarcliff"

It is believed that Paleo-Indians were well established in the Upper Chattahoochee corridor by 5000 BCE and that bowls carved out of soapstone in the Stone Mountain area of present-day DeKalb County were part of "a trading system that extended as far as the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico."[1] As Darlene Roth and Andy Ambrose note, "Georgia's Creek Indians migrated from the Mississippi Valley into the Chattahoochee Valley around 100-1000 A.D.; the Cherokees, coming from the northern Mississippian territories, moved into the Carolinas, eastern Tennessee, and northern Georgia about 1450."[2]

European explorers invaded present-day Georgia in the early 1500s, conquering the coastal lands first in attempt to secure the harbors necessary for delivering to Europe the riches of the new land. Once the coast had been settled, Europeans pushed inland in to procure more land and establish trade agreements and routes with the natives. Countless Native Americans died and within one century, just a few generations' time, "most Mississippian societies had collapsed, and the surviving populations had spread across the land."[3] Supplanted and dispersed by European invaders, Native Americans persisted in the region, but with substantially less power.

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[1]Andy Ambrose, *Atlanta: An Illustrated History* (Athens, GA: Hill Street Press, 2003), 2.
[2]Darlene R. Roth and Andy Ambrose, *Metropolitan Frontiers: A Short History of Atlanta* (Atlanta, GA: Longstreet Press, 1996), 4.
[3]Ibid., 3.

By the time of the arrival of the English in 1733, surveyors recorded two remaining tribes in present-day Georgia, the Creeks and the Cherokee.[4] Located south and east of the Chattahoochee River, this alignment places modern-day Atlanta on Creek land.

Georgia, of course, was the last of the first thirteen colonies. Named after King George II, Georgia became a colony in the spring of 1732 under the direction of General James Oglethorpe.

That said, Atlanta historian, Andy Ambrose suggests that the Indian Springs Treaty (1825) marked the relinquishment of all remaining Creek lands. However, since the treaty was illegal under both Creek national and federal law, in 1826, "President [James] Monroe negotiated a new treaty with the Creeks that formalized the sale of all remaining Creek lands in Georgia, though still allowing them to retain some of their lands in Alabama."[5]

But the tide changed with the 1828 presidential elections. In that year, Andrew Jackson campaigned on the promise of Indian removal. Not only was he elected, but "in 1830 Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which authorized Jackson to negotiate removal treaties with all remaining Indian tribes in the Southeast."[6]

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[4]Ambrose notes that the Creeks are/were erroneously labeled as one distinct group, writing, "The Native Americans that the English referred to as the Creeks were actually a loose political confederation of tribes of differing backgrounds and language. (At least ten different languages and dialects were spoken among this group.) The Creek Confederation had a sizeable nucleus of towns in middle Georgia around the present-day Columbus area, but their lands and communities also extended westward into Alabama, south to the coast, and northward toward the mountains. Each town in the Creek Confederacy was an independent and autonomous unit, possessing its own town square where all the important governmental and ceremonial activities took place." (3)

[5]Ambrose, 13.

[6]Ambrose, 13-14. Ambrose adds, "In 1832, the US Supreme Court…[ruled] that the Cherokees were a sovereign nation and distribution of their land and property were invalid. Unfortunately for the Indians, the state of Georgia and the executive and legislative braches of the federal government largely ignored this ruling." (14)

Atlanta's Founding

The first white residents in the area that is now Atlanta were frontier travellers or the handful of those travellers who settled in the area to provide lodging and supplies to the passers-by economy.[7] In 1836 there were perhaps a total of thirty-five families and about 250 people, excluding slaves, living in the region immediately around present-day Atlanta.[8] These settlers arrived during the final stages of Native American expulsion. DeKalb County, the county that contains present-day Atlanta, was established in 1823 by the acquisition and redistribution of Creek land just east of the Chattahoochee River. What initially put Atlanta on the map, figuratively and literally, was the expansion of southern railroad systems and the need to connect coastal economies to the Midwest. In 1836, the state-owned Western & Atlantic Railroad chartered the development of a railway that would connect the northern Georgia mountains (and Chattanooga) to the privately owned antebellum railroads sprouting out of Augusta and Savannah in the southeastern corner of the state.[9] That connecting station was first called Terminus

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[7]Atlanta lies on the Piedmont Plateau, just east of the Chattahoochee River and just south of the Appalachian Mountains, land once home to the Creek Nation. For northeastern settlers, it was impossible—or at least too costly and dangerous—to cross the Appalachian range, so travelers, primarily those of the Old South (Virginia and the Carolinas) took the southerly route, known as the Great Pennsylvania Wagon Road, around the fifteen-hundred-mile range. Georgia lay at the end of that road. Roth and Ambrose write, ""The first white residents in the Atlanta region lived in DeKalb County and serviced these migrating cattleman, farmers, adventurers, and traders by establishing ferries at critical points on the rivers and taverns or inns along the stagecoach routes." Present-day street names such as Paces Ferry Road, for example, are reminiscent of these first settlers and passers-thru. See Roth and Ambrose, 14.

[8]Roth and Ambrose, 16. Of these earliest settlers, there were primarily Irish and Scotch-Irish but also Germans and Jews.

[9]Stephen Harriman Long, chief engineer of the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad, was a veteran topographical engineer in the US Army with vast experience in exploration and railroad surveying. He was the man tasked with establishing a terminus—an end of the line—that would link Chattanooga to the middle of the state and eventually allow for access from the Savannah port to the Midwest and the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The ridge where Long drove his surveyor stake in September 1837 was appropriately first named Terminus, and the railway that it would terminate would take nearly a decade to lay, span 137 miles, and cost the state five million dollars. Roth and Abrose add: "Georgia's land policies were part of a larger overall effort to create a connection between the Atlantic trade routes, anchored at Savannah and at Charleston, and the interior trade routes in the United States, now rooted in the river towns

Certainly those early surveyors could hardly expect that their tiny railroad stop would become the metropolitan home of 4.18 million people.[10] The future of Terminus lay not in the traffic of the waterway or highway, but in the burgeoning national railway that would centralize Terminus as a key developing city. Terminus would become "Marthasville" for a short period of time, from 1843 to 1845, when "Atlanta" gained lasting prominence.[11] [12]

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along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. If Georgia was to become commercially competitive with other American states, it had to connect the two systems—coast and interior. Northwest Georgia lay in the very middle between the rich western lands and the prosperous old seaports on the southern coasts. So the state of Georgia, intent upon finding ways for travelers to pass through that quadrant of the state—still Indian territory—to connect the Atlantic coast with the interior markets, undertook not only an aggressive land grant policy but an ambitious transportation plan as well." (18-19)

[10]Atlanta Regional Commission, "Regional Snapshot: 2012 Atlanta Region Population," August 2012, available at http://documents.atlantaregional.com/enewsletters/reg_snapshot/0812/RS_July_2012_Pop.pdf; Timothy J. Crimmins and Dana F. White, "Looking for Atlanta," in *The New Georgia Guide* (Athens: University of Georgia Press,1996), 233: "Long himself left town after railroad construction was completed, still believing the conventional wisdom that great cities would grow only on coastal harbors and navigable rivers. See also https://www.markeroni.com/catalog/display.php?code=GA_M_00088: A South Carolinian contemporary to Long, however, and the nation's seventh Vice President, John C. Calhoun, had a bigger vision for this developing town. He saw that the burgeoning rail systems of the Southeast and the Midwest were "constituting from the remarkable formation of the country one entire system of roads uniting at a great central point, through which the whole have a common interest, each in the completion of the other, each increasing its particular prosperity from the prosperity of the whole." See also http://dlib.gsu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/oneal/id/631. This quotation is taken from the "Prophecy of John C. Calhoun" plaque (located at Edgewood and Park in Atlanta), which excerpts from Calhoun's address during the Southwestern Convention at Memphis (November 13, 1845).

[11]In that Southwestern Convention of 1845, Calhoun refers to the town of Atlanta, not 'Terminus' as it was known the previous decade. In fact there never was an incorporated town for Terminus; it was a name given for a point on a map at the end of a line, even when in the early 1840s it was being developed. "Corporate identity first came," write Roth and Ambrose, "when 'Terminus' was changed to 'Marthasville,' in honor of Martha Lumpkin, [then Governor] Wilson Lumpkin's youngest daughter." (Roth and Ambrose, 24.) The name was chosen by area boosters in attempt to gain the governor's favor, and became official on December 12, 1843. The name was short-lived. Months later, Georgia Railroad employees suggested that Marthasville was too long of a word for the rail schedule. It was also a rather feminine name for a town full of rail workers and construction workers, that is, as compared to the nearby Rough and Ready, Georgia, for example. Chief Engineer J. Edgar Thomson proposed the name Atlanta and superintendent Richard Peters "began immediately to use the term on the railroad station." (Roth and Ambrose, 25.) Before long, Marthasville and Atlanta were pseudonymous, but on December 29, 1845 Marthasville officially became (only) Atlanta. It's not completely clear where the name 'Atlanta' came from, but Gov. Lumpkin "maintained to his death that Atlanta was still named after his daughter, whose middle name…was 'Atalanta'" after the eponymously named character in Greek mythology. See Roth and Ambrose, 25.

[12]The late 1840s saw several key developments: Atlanta's first newspaper, *The Luminary*, came in 1845; the Atlanta Hotel was erected (in brick!) two years later; the first elections were conducted the following year, in 1848.

The railway gave Atlanta life.[13] By midcentury Atlanta had become "a funnel of prosperity for merchants in Augusta, Charleston, Savannah" as cotton and rice, for example, passed thru Atlanta on its way to the West, South, and Midwest.[14] It's no surprise, then, that it was called the "Gate City" since Atlanta was both a hub of trade and a center for hospitality services. As trade thru Atlanta grew, Atlanta itself grew; as Atlanta grew around that first depot, it also grew in wealth and population, even as "outsider's greed"—viz. investors/speculators—supplied much of that growth.[15] Before long the landscape became dotted with buildings scaling as high as four stories.[16] In 1850, there were a few more than 2500 residents, including 512 slaves owned by 139 Atlantans; four years later, the overall population had more than doubled.[17]

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[13]"By 1850, Atlanta was connected to Chattanooga, Tennessee, via the Western and Atlantic, to Augusta, Georgia, via the Georgia Railroad, and to Macon, Georgia, via the Macon and Western." (See Roth and Ambrose, 20.) Atlanta was also linked to Knoxville, Memphis, Charleston, and Savannah; removed once again, it was connected to Louisville, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Five years later, the Atlanta and West Point Railroad linked Atlanta to southwest Georgia and Alabama and thus to the lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf of Mexico. The link had been made between the Atlantic and the Mississippi. It only took eighteen years.

[14]Roth and Ambrose, 20.

[15]A particular local landowner, however, contributed greatly to the growth of Atlanta. Samuel Mitchell owned 202 acres of undeveloped land a mile southeast of the original mile zero. A visionary (or at least a savvy businessman), Mitchell proposed to move the rail depot. "In exchange for the relocation of his property of what would become a railroad junction, he provided, free of charge, a right-of-way through his acreage, a place to build a passenger station, and land for a public plaza in front of the terminal." (Crimmins and White, 234.) The state agreed and relocated the terminal, securing for Mitchell the opportunity to be the city's first major developer. He then divided the surrounding land into streets, plots, and public squares, securing prime real estate for both residential and commercial growth. "Development was especially concentrated along certain east-west streets (Alabama, Decatur and Wall)," write Roth and Ambrose, "and their adjacent north-south cross streets (Peachtree, Whitehall, Pryor, and Central)." (See Roth and Ambrose, 25.)

[16]By the early 1850s, warehouses, gins, hotels, specialty shops, groceries, doctors, lawyers, and every other trapping of a small, but quickly growing, town—including saloons!—were present. Similarly the growth of Atlanta meant that the 'spokes' of the young rail system (of which Atlanta was the hub) also developed just outside of Atlanta. "East Point, College Park, Marietta, Norcross, Chamblee, Lithonia, and Jonesboro were towns that entrepreneurs established along the web of rails coming into Atlanta." (See Crimmins and White, 234.)

[17]Roth and Ambrose, 30.

Civil War

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States, thereby ending the South's stronghold on the federal government.[18] A major component of Lincoln's platform had been a newly robust nationalism, which specifically denounced any threats of cessation as treasonous. In response to the nation's new agenda, seven southern states—the Confederate States of America, as they called themselves—marked their dissatisfaction and declared their secession on March 4, 1861. As promised, such secession was considered treasonous. The American Civil War officially began just five weeks later when Confederate soldiers fired on the Union base at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Lincoln responded by deploying forces of his own. Four more Southern states seceded. In response to the April 12, 1861, attack on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's subsequent reply, both the Confederacy and the Union raised armies and the Civil War was underway.

In the months that led up to the 1860 election, "opinions in Atlanta regarding which path the city and the region should take varied widely."[19] The polls would eventually show that the majority of Atlantans (and those in the region) voted for the Unionist presidential candidate, who as it turns out, wasn't Lincoln.[20] This is a curious fact of history since the state would officially secede just a few months later.[21] Perhaps it was the concern of local businesspeople who worried that a secessionist agenda would hinder the growing economy of Georgia. Those Unionists who remained in Atlanta after

[18]The republican from Illinois carried just under 40% of the vote—the lowest take of any elected president—and eighteen of the thirty-three states. And even with such a slim margin, the election of Abraham Lincoln fundamentally changed the American landscape perhaps more than any other election. He ran on a platform of the containment of slavery, among other decidedly republican promises. Emancipation may have been an ideal somewhere on the horizon, but it was not a campaign promise.
[19]Ambrose, 32.
[20]Lincoln and the Republican Party did not campaign in Georgia.
[21]The Georgia Secession Convention met at different times between January 16 and March 23, 1861.

the state's secession faced ample pressure, especially by the state's Vigilance Committee, which sought out abolitionists, Union sympathizers, and spies. "As a result," notes historian Andy Ambrose, "many Unionists either left the city, went underground, or, at the very least, kept an extremely low profile."[22] Dissenters largely weeded out, or at least made ineffective, Atlanta "quickly became both a major wartime producer and an important regional transportation and distribution center."[23] Atlanta's significance was such that "if Atlanta fell, the Confederacy would not only lose approximately one-half of its military production capabilities, but the loss of Atlanta's rail lines would also severely curtail the Confederacy's ability to supply its troops and continue the war effort."[24] The Confederacy was wholly reliant on Atlanta.[25] As went Atlanta, so went the Confederacy.

Atlanta's population more than doubled during the war and it became the third largest city in the Confederacy behind Richmond, Virginia, and New Orleans. Nevertheless, the war greatly taxed the political, social, and economic health of the region, no more so than when Atlanta was finally forced, after weeks of losses, to

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[22]Ambrose, 32.

[23]Ambrose, 32–33. As is often the case during wartime, the industry of Atlanta changed to accommodate the needs of the Confederacy. Ambrose explains, "In 1861, for example, the Western & Atlantic's machine shops devoted four of their forges to the rifling of gun barrels, and the shops of the Georgia Railroad were used to produce two breech-loading cannons (weighing between six and eight hundred pounds). Similarly, the Atlanta Rolling Mill (one of two factories in the Confederacy capable of making railroad track) added to its manufacturing line the production of naval armor plate." (32–33) Other businesses sprung up to support the war effort, and they included the manufacturing of: swords, pistols, percussion caps for muskets and pistols, small arms ammunition, saddles, bridles, knapsacks, belt buckles, cartridge boxes, canteens, shoes, leather, and clothing. As Ambrose notes, the Quartermaster's Depot, which supplied shoes and clothing, "employed over three thousand seamstresses, making one hundred and thirty thousand uniforms per year at the height of production." (33) It was, of course, the railroad, the great infrastructure that first put Atlanta on the map, that proved to be one of its greatest assets as these goods were readily distributable to all parts of the Confederacy.

[24]Ambrose, 35.

[25]Atlanta also became a treatment hub for wounded Confederate soldiers. "At one time," write Roth and Ambrose, "the Confederate army was running twenty-six hospitals in the city." (34) And it served as both a recruitment center and detention facility for Union prisoners. As was the case for most major cities, the war effort took precedent as the major political, social, and economic agenda.

surrender to the Union on September 2, 1864.[26] For the next two months, Sherman rested and resupplied his troops. On November 16, 1864, the Union's General Sherman

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[26] Population increases may be boons to certain burgeoning economies, but with the federal blockade on the southern ports and no imports coming from the North either, not only did prices go up and shelves become bare, but inflation greatly exacerbated the economic situation. The economy of Georgia (and Atlanta) was further troubled by the need for soldiers, that is, the need to pull men out of factories and groceries and tanneries to take up arms. Slaves and other manual laborers were also commissioned as soldiers, making the general workforce, the very backbone of the economy, severely strained. As a result, white women entered the work force and organized themselves. Ambrose observes, "The tremendous wartime population increase, coupled with a growing influx of slaves and other newcomers into the city, taxed Atlanta's ability to maintain social order." (35) And none of these issues take into account the direct consequences of battle, which, of course, also permanently took many men out of the Atlanta workforce.

Those consequences would soon hit home in the most costly way. In the spring of 1964, General William Tecumseh Sherman took control over the Union's western forces. "Atlanta was a strategic target for Federal armies," explain Roth and Ambrose, "because it was the hub of Confederate transportation and manufacturing in the lower South as well as the logistical and administrative base of the Confederate forces in the western theater." (37) Turning his attention toward Atlanta, Sherman's first agenda was to sack the city by taking control of the rail system. Sherman slowly worked his way south from Dalton, Georgia. Large numbers of casualties occurred for both sides as the Confederacy attempted to impede Sherman's progress. But they were outmatched.

In a winding route that lasted a month, Union troops reached the Chattahoochee River on July 9, 1864, officially bringing them into the outskirts of Atlanta. Sherman's Confederate counterpart, General Joseph E. Johnston, was swiftly relieved of his duties by Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who had witness one too many retreats. General John Bell Hood, a man with a tactically aggressive reputation, took Johnston's place. As one can imagine, news spread quickly in Atlanta that shit was about to hit the fan. Chaos ensued and within days a great number of Atlantans cut their losses and split town. Months earlier, with the threat of Northern advancements looming, storehouses of supplies had already been moved out of the city.

Sherman believed that if he controlled the railroads, he would control the city and eventually take it down. He had hoped for a swift campaign, but the battle over Atlanta lasted for several weeks and was costly to both sides. In the battle for Atlanta, while both sides suffered several casualties, it was always the Confederacy that suffered the most, each time, even as they delayed Sherman's complete control of the railroads. Sherman changed tactics and began a prolonged and persistent shelling of the city. Ambrose writes, "Beginning on August 9, 1864, Atlanta was subjected to a withering fire of shells that targeted the buildings of the Atlanta arsenal and other industries and manufacturers, church steeples, and other prominent landmarks." (42) The onslaught was impressive and costly but neither led to surrender nor defeat. On August 25, Sherman pulled his troops and ventured west in attempt to capture the last remaining rail line at Jonesboro. He was successful.

With the inevitable staring him down, General Hood activated a full-scale evacuation of Atlanta. "On September 1," Ambrose explains, "their withdrawal began, following the destruction of city ammunition dumps and five locomotives and eighty-one boxcars—twenty-eight of which were loaded with gunpowder, shells, rifles, and cartridges. The tremendous explosions and fires that resulted from this destruction convinced many Atlantans that the Union occupation of the city was already underway." (42) In reality, the fleeing confederate troops were destroying supplies that could be used on them in the future. By the next day, a great number of Atlantans had already left the city, leaving behind Union sympathizers and those either too ill or too poor to evacuate. Atlanta had already suffered greatly, so to prevent further loss, Mayor James Montgomery Calhoun assembled and deployed a party that delivered Atlanta's surrender to Sherman on September 2. Three days later, Sherman arrived in Atlanta, assuming control of the city.

marched his troops south toward Savannah, but not before wreaking havoc on the city. Ambrose explains:

> Fire and violent soldiers demolished the city's railroad depots, the roundhouse, the machine shops, and all other railroad support buildings. Public buildings, selected commercial enterprises, industries (including the Winship Foundry and the Atlanta Gas Light company that were operated by Union sympathizers), military installations, and blacksmith shops were also targeted. Sherman's instructions called for engineers to level the buildings before they were torched, but eager and careless soldiers set fire to many structures before the engineers arrived. As a result, many Atlanta homes and businesses not marked for destruction were also consumed in the fires that swept the city on November 15, 1864.[27]

The Civil War, Ambrose writes, "left Atlanta burnt, barren, and bankrupt."[28] Atlanta rose to prominence quickly, in just a few decades' time, but it lost some four to five thousand buildings and collapsed to absolute ruin in a matter of just days. Roth and Ambrose note that "Atlanta suffered the worst devastation of any American city in wartime."[29]

Rebuilding Atlanta

Despite the massive losses, Atlanta rebuilt quickly. In fact, "its recovery from Civil War devastation," explain Roth and Ambrose, "was nothing short of 'miraculous' according to most historians, and its patterns of boosterish commercial pragmatism might be said to have been reborn at this time."[30] Despite the fact that nearly every significant building was destroyed upon Sherman's departure, the spirit of Atlanta remained. And that spirit was boosted by an uncanny population growth. "By 1870," writes Ambrose, "there were already double the number of people in the city that had been there ten years

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[27]Ambrose, 46.
[28]Ibid.
[29]Roth and Ambrose, 44.
[30]Ibid.

earlier, and by 1900," he adds, "Atlanta was the largest city in the state (with a population of ninety thousand) and the fourth-largest in the Southeast (behind only New Orleans, Nashville, and Richmond, Virginia)."[31] With the spirit of Atlanta leading the growth spurt, thousands of people flocked to this promised land of the South.

As was the case in the 1830s, during Atlanta's rise, in the period between 1865 and 1900, at the center of Atlanta's growth was the redevelopment of the rail. "Two years after the Civil War ended," writes Ambrose, "all of the railroads serving Atlanta and their connecting lines were once again in operation, and a railroad boom was underway that would soon connect the city to the far corners of the region and nation."[32] The rails provided the delivery of supplies and the export of goods to the region. It brought thousands back to the city and others to the city for the first time. Businesses built in the shadows of the rails so that as the rails grew and prospered so too did the Atlanta economy. Before long, Atlanta was back, and stronger than ever.

Hurt, Olmsted, Druid Hills

With the growth of Atlanta came the development of planned residential neighborhoods, Inman Park being the first. Its primary developer was a young civil engineer, Joel Hurt. In 1875, at twenty-five, Hurt arrived in Atlanta with an ambitious spirit that led not only to the development of Inman Park but Druid Hills as well.[33] Upon

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[31]Ambrose, 47.
[32]Ibid., 48.
[33]Hurt was not a native of Atlanta, but had spent several years nearby. Robert Hartle Jr. writes: "Joel hurt was born on July 31, 1850, in Hurtsboro, Alabama. Hurt was not wealthy, but he was able to matriculate at Auburn University for one year before finishing his education at Franklin College (now the University of Georgia) in Athens, Georgia. He graduated in 1871 with a civil engineering degree. From there, Hurt spent the next four year working as a railroad surveyor in different parts of the country before relocating to Atlanta in 1875. A jack-of-all-trades if ever there was one, Hurt would spend the next fifty years involved

his arrival, Hurt created a building and loan association. Years later he founded the Atlanta and Edgewood Street Railroad Company, a streetcar company, and the East Atlanta Land Company, which he used to develop land on the city's eastern side. He also constructed Atlanta's (and the South's) first skyscraper, the Equitable Building. During the 1880s and 90s, Hurt also "bought, consolidated, and converted to electric power almost all of the street railroads in the city, organized the Trust Company of Georgia, managed the Georgia Iron and Coal Company, and served a term as president of the American Street Railway Association," writes Elizabeth A. Lyon.[34]

Hurt was a busy man, perhaps over-extended at times, who introduced to Atlanta some of the latest urban planning technologies. Regarded as "one of the most successful real estate developers of the nineteenth century," Hurt focused on the east side of town, where Inman Park was his greatest achievement.[35] "It came complete with a trolley line, a suburban boulevard, park land, and a landscaped plat in which the streets were laid out, not in rectangular grids, but in curvilinear patterns which conformed to the natural terrain," writes Ambrose.[36] This style of design—an emphasis on landscape design with a healthy vision for both land preservation and use—followed in the footsteps of the great American landscape designer, Frederick Law Olmsted.

In fact, it was Olmsted whom Hurt hired to design his next major real estate venture in Atlanta, Druid Hills. Olmsted's reputation preceded him. It included the co-designing of both New York City's Central Park and the largest residence in the United

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in everything from insurance to streetcars, to botany and horticulture." See Robert Hartle, Jr., *Atlanta's Druid Hills: A Brief Introduction* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008), 14.
[34]Elizabeth A. Lyon, "Frederick Law Olmsted and Joel Hurt: Planning for Atlanta," in *Olmsted South Critic/New South Planner*, ed. Dana F. White and Victor A. Kramer (Westport, CT: GreenwoodPress, Inc., 1979), 166.
[35]Ambrose, 83.
[36]Roth and Ambrose, 68.

States, the Biltmore Estate of Asheville, NC. (His resume included many other very well known and highly regarded developments and designs.) Olmsted was an amateur botanist who designed in such a way that complemented rather than tamed the land. For Olmsted, writes Hartle, "the ideal neighborhood would not only provide shelter and accessible transportation routes, but also aesthetically pleasing residential areas that allowed for reflection and relaxation after a long day's work."[37] Evidence of this is seen today when driving east on Ponce de Leon Avenue, which winds through the rolling knolls of Druid Hills in a serpentine design; it follows the contours of the land rather than creating a direct line thru.[38]

Olmsted first visited Atlanta in 1890 and drew up the first major plans for the neighborhood by March 1893, all in agreement with Hurt and his real estate investment company called the Kirkwood Company.[39] However, Olmsted expressed reservations about Hurt's management of the property. Would the planned lakes be free of malaria? Would Hurt and his colleagues drastically alter Olmsted's master plan? And was he, Olmsted, healthy enough to see the plan thru? Hurt convinced Olmsted to stay on, but it would be his last residential suburban design.

The elder Olmsted's health had progressively become a concern and "by 1895, he had retired, leaving direction of the firm's activities to his stepson, John C., and his son, Frederick Law."[40] A year later, the elder Olmsted's senility was evident enough that he was permanently committed to McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts. It was a

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[37]Hartle, 16.
[38]Hartle notes that Olmsted wrote Hurt suggesting that "the Parkway should be as spacious as circumstances will permit; and should be finely constructed, and adequate arrangements should be made for lots being well shaded by handsome, umbrageous, permanently thrifty trees." See Hartle 16.
[39]The initial plans primarily included the area immediately surrounding Ponce de Leon Avenue.
[40]Lyon, 177.

fitting residence for Olmsted's twilight. In 1895, shortly before his retiring, Olmsted was consulted for the relocation of the McLean Hospital to its Belmont campus. It's possible that he planned the grounds too, but there is no direct evidence to support that claim. Frederick Law Olmsted died at McLean in 1903.

In that same year, Hurt was making plans to sell lots, even as John Olmsted petitioned him to hold off until the land was more attractive (developed) and prepared (utility wise). Convinced that his stockholders were becoming impatient, Hurt proceeded nonetheless, creating plots and grading lots. In 1905, the Olmsted brothers submitted their final plan, which included the name 'Druid Hills'. Hartle notes that Druid Hills was among a list of more than thirty possibilities that were presented to Hurt by John C. Olmsted. This part of Atlanta reminded Olmsted of Druid Hill Park in Baltimore, Maryland, where the Olmsteds were working on a park and planned neighborhood.[41] Hurt chose the name in 1902.

In 1907, the development was announced to the public, who seemed generally attracted to the proposed bucolic design. Shortly thereafter, Hurt relinquished his control of the vision. Historians debate the reason for his need to sell. Robert Hartle, Jr. writes, "The Panic of 1893—brought on when the Federal Reserve reached its minimum on gold that could be redeemed for silver notes, resulting in inflated interest payments on government bonds—caused widespread bankruptcy throughout the country and forced Hurt to temporarily abandon plans for Druid Hills in order to concentrate on business

[41]Hartle adds, "Druid Hill Park was likely named by Colonel Nicholas Rogers upon his return to Baltimore after studying at Glasgow University in Scotland. As Eden Unger Bowditch notes, the Druids had 'veneration for nature and, in particular, oaks, tops of hills, and certain groves of trees.' Furthermore, oaks represented the spiritual and physical well-being of Celtic clans. An oak was planted in the center of each clan's courtyard, and if a rival clan disfigured or destroyed it, that was a sign of total defeat. The land that makes up Druid Park is characterized by rolling hills and numerous oaks, hence the name." (See Hartle, 19.)

ventures to which he was more financially committed."[42] One argument, then, is that Hurt was in financial trouble and had to unload Druid Hills to attend to more pressing financial matters. In her essay, "Frederick Law Olmsted and Joel Hurt: Planning for Atlanta," Elizabeth A. Lyon suggests that it may be that the issue for Hurt's commitment wasn't as much a financial burden as it was a lack of interest.[43] As Lyon explains, it seems that Hurt's passion lay in the dreaming and first steps of development, not the fruition. Hartle agress, writing that Hurt "could come across like a child who begs and begs for a new toy and then grows tired of it after a few hours."[44] So, perhaps the reason was a lack of passion, boredom.[45]

Whatever the reason, Druid Hills changed hands when Joel Hurt "was forced" by extenuating financial circumstance or his own ennui "to sell his interest in the project to a local syndicate composed of Coca-Cola magnate Asa Candler, Georgia Railway and Power Company president Preston Arkwright, and realtors Forrest and George Adair for about half a million dollars."[46] The sale included 1,492 acres.[47] This was the largest residential land sale in Atlanta to date (May 1908). (The syndicate incorporated as the Druid Hills Corporation.)

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[42]Hartle, 15.
[43]Lyon, 168.
[44]Hartle, 14.
[45]Joel Hurt's contribution to the post-War rebirth of Atlanta, however, must be emphasized. He was an urban visionary of the highest sorts, even if he was overly eager in some situations and grew bored in others. Atlanta needed entrepreneurial innovators like Hurt to recover as it did, and Atlanta's growing prominence in the South is the direct result of folks like Hurt, who committed some seventeen years to seeing Druid Hills to what would be one of the elite Atlanta neighborhoods of the first half of the 20th century.
[46]Ambrose, 85.
[47]The National Parks Service notes the understood boundaries of Druid Hills. "Druid Hills is roughly bounded by the Fulton County line on the west, Briarcliff Rd. to the northwest, just over the Emory Rd. line on the north and following the southside of Emory Rd. The boundary cuts south and juts east around the Fernbank Forest and Recreational Center, then cuts east and south along tracks of the Seabord Coast Line. South it is bordered by North Ave. and the Atlanta City Boundary." See National Park Service Atlanta, "Druid Hills Historic District," accessed September 15, 2013. http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/dru.htm.

Whether it was a lack of funds or a lack of interest, Hurt's relationship with Olmsted was transferred to the Druid Hills syndicate of Adair, Arkwright, and Candler, the latter of which held a 90% stake in the Druid Hills Corporation, making him the dominant shareholder; the next highest stake holder, Adair, had 5%. Candler's stake equated to 1392.8 acres, if the shares were split along acreage. Part of that portion of land was just west Williams Mill Road, what would become Briarcliff Road. It seem that area was reserved by Candler as private farmland—Briarcliff Farm—that would later become his son's Briarcliff estate.

Druid Hills' first home was built 1909 at the corner of Ponce de Leon and Williams Mill Road (later Briarcliff Rd.). Georgian Revival was the architectural style that came to characterize the neighborhood. There were exceptions, but "the typical Druid Hills home…was a substantial, symmetrically composed, block-shaped building with a small entrance portico of classically derived details," notes Lyon.[48] Over the next few decades, Druid Hills grew to become a substantially occupied residential neighborhood known for its manicured lawns, large plots, and the homes of Atlanta's elite. While some residential developments of the early 20th century excluded Jews, Druid Hills Corporation voted to be inclusive of Jews, which in a few different sources is noted as an exceptional decision.[49]

By the mid-1930s, Druid Hills had secured police protection, public education, and a fire department, sort of. (Because Druid Hills was outside Atlanta city limits and

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[48]Lyon, 179.

[49]See Elizabeth Candler Graham, and Ralph Roberts, *The Real Ones: Four Generations of the First Family of Coca-Cola* (Fort Lee: Barricade Books, 1992), 189–90. They write, "In July 1910, the stockholders voted (with one individual opposed—this person was bought out by the Candlers shortly afterwards) that 'no offer on any lot in Druid Hills (190) shall be refused solely on the ground that the prospective purchases is a Jew.'" "In making this decision," they add, "Asa and his partners were departing from the norm; they were also insuring increased sales to a very prosperous, cultured, and educated segment of Atlanta's population."

part of unincorporated DeKalb County, residents of Druid Hills did not pay taxes to Atlanta and, thus, did not reap the benefits of police or fire response, for example.) "In April of 1933," writes Hartle, "the only residences in Druid Hills whose calls would be answered by the Atlanta fire department were those whose proprietors had pledged fifty dollars to the fire department. Basically, if one failed to pledge the fifty dollars and one's house caught fire, one was left to one's own devices to extinguish the blaze."[50] It behooved Druid Hills to try to incorporate into DeKalb County so as to contribute toward (pay taxes) and thus reap the benefits of not only full fire protection but all other benefits that come from being incorporated. However, on the first attempt the governor vetoed the incorporation bill, stating that it would draw people away from Atlanta, among other reasons. A second attempt was signed by the governor, but it was not for incorporation; rather, Druid Hills residents were all required to pay a tax to the County who built a fire station specifically for the neighborhood. From there, it wasn't long before police service, public schooling, and other community benefits began to emerge.

Nearly a century after Druid Hills' founding, the *New York Times* sent reporter Peter Applebome to explore Atlanta prior to the 1996 Olympics. Applebome reported that it "is best exemplified by its grand, rambling houses near the beginning of the century on shady streets such as Lullwater, Oakdale, and Springdale Roads."[51] These are the three main roads that run thru the heart of Druid Hills. What was true for the *Times* nearly two decades ago, remains true today.

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[50]Hartle, 24.
[51]Peter Applebome, "Atlanta: Scenes Beyond the Mall," *New York Times*, June 1, 1996.

Candler Family

"Most of us growing up in Atlanta during the 1940s were familiar with the name Candler," remembers historian Ann Uhry Abrams.[52] "It meant Coca-Cola, it meant wealth, and it meant all the mansions that dotted my Druid Hills neighborhood."[53] This is how Abrams begins her book, *Formula for Fortune: How Asa Candler Discovered Coca-Cola and Turned It into the Wealth His Children Enjoyed*, a historical sketch of the Candler family from ante-bellum rural Georgia to mid-twentieth century Atlanta.

Asa Candler, of course, was the man who took Coca-Cola to the world, but he also served as mayor of Atlanta during World War I, was one of the most significant real estate investors in Atlanta, and provided the funds that transformed a tiny school, Oxford College, into Emory University. Asa Candler and his progeny were among the most significant shapers of Atlanta, even as they were sometimes complicated, if not tragic figures. The Candlers' contributions, tribulations, and notoriety make them something like the Kennedys of Atlanta—a wealthy, powerful family, riddled with both success and tragedy.As Ann Abrams puts it, Candler was "the South's equivalent of Andrew Carnegie or John D. Rockefeller."[54] Asa Candler's contribution to Atlanta was such that towards the end of a long tenure of public service, he was awarded the honorary title of first citizen of Atlanta. And that title is indebted only slightly to his midwifery of the Coca-Cola Corporation.

Asa Candler was born to Martha (Beall) and Sam Candler on December 30, 1851. Both Sam and Martha were of Scotch-Irish farming families, and made their home in Villa Rica, Georgia, which lay just over thirty miles east of Atlanta. There they farmed

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[52]Abrams, xi.
[53]Ibid.
[54]Ibid.

their land and managed a general store in town, their eleven children all contributing to the work needed to manage both enterprises. "Since Sam and Martha had come up the hard way," explains Abrams, "they demanded that all of their children perform regular and often vigorous chores."[55] And even though, the Candlers were farming folk, Sam's dreams for his children were not limited. He expected them to be lawyers and teachers and doctors, all respectable occupations.

For Asa, the eighth child, it was expected that he would become a physician. In fact, we has named after a doctor that was a friend of the family. But young Asa resisted higher education, stating that he was never quite ready. And yet as Abrams notes, "Later in life he told a reporter that being a physician shone as a more luminous boyhood goal for him than being 'president or the world's greatest ball player.'"[56] Anxious to enroll as a medical student, Asa was nonetheless eager to learn as much as he could about medicine in order to prepare for medical school. Therefore, while living in Cartersville with his sister Florence—who acted as his tutor, being a teacher herself—Asa secured his first job in the world of medicine as an apprentice at a local pharmacy.

That first job was particularly formative for young Asa, because next to the pharmacy was the pharmacists' (who were also a physicians) medical clinic. Asa was able to both observe the doctors as they treated patients and learn the art of mixing chemicals. At night he "poured over anatomy books and began learning Latin and Greek," which were prerequisites for medical college.[57] With time, however, Asa's interest in studying medicine was supplanted by his distinct interest in becoming a pharmacist.

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[55]Abrams, 11
[56]Ibid., 19.
[57]Ibid.

In 1873, aware that there were few opportunities in Cartersville, Asa, then 22, set his sights on Atlanta, where opportunities abounded. With the help of Dr. Asa Griggs, after whom he was named and who was widely known and respected, Asa secured a job with Atlanta pharmacist George Howard. It wasn't long before Howard had promoted the disciplined and ambitious Asa to chief clerk and gave him his first real salary.

Within months of moving to Atlanta, however, Asa and his family suffered the death of Sam, Asa's father. To settle the estate and get his mother situated, Asa returned to Villa Rica, putting his pharmaceutical career on hold. With only his thirteen-year-old brother John to help, Asa managed both the farm and the store, which made a modest comeback after the war. The burden of responsibility was too much and it became impossible to maintain both the farm and the store, so Asa sold the farm and moved his mother to Cartersville to live with his sister Florence.

With his mother in good care, Asa returned to Atlanta in 1875. Working once again with George Howard offered a particularly fortuitous perk as Asa began spending more and more time with Howard's fourteen-year-old daughter Lucy. Asa's relationship to Howard "was becoming increasingly strained," notes Abrams, "partly because of his own ambitious agenda but mostly because of his growing attachment to Lucy Elizabeth."[58]

Asa had his eye set on his own pharmacy, or at least his ambitions exceeded that of being the assistant to Howard. Recognizing this, Howard sold his pharmacy to Asa and opened a competing pharmacy just a few blocks away. Asa and Howard were now direct competitors, and it didn't help the tension between the two when Asa and Lucy became engaged in 1877. Howard thought his nineteen-year-old daughter was too young

[58]Abrams, 27.

for marriage. His objection was firm; when Asa and Lucy married on January 15, 1878, Howard was not present. Eventually Asa and Howard reconciled, primarily for Lucy's sake. The peace offering came in a letter sent from Howard to Asa: "I am disposed to 'bury the hatchet' and to be friendly in the future—if this should meet your approval you can let me know."[59] Nine days later, on December 28, 1878, Lucy and Asa welcomed their first child, Charles Howard. In all they had five children who gave them twenty-one grandchildren.

As Asa's family grew, so did his career—that is, until August 1883 when his pharmacy caught fire in the middle of the night. Virtually all was lost, but insurance funds allowed him to rebuild and restock. The fire was a temporary setback but it was also perhaps the most important catalyst of his career. Because he had lost so many customers in the process, he had to find a new way to attract business. At the time, patented medicines and tonics was a potentially lucrative business, and Asa wondered if he could tap into that market. As Ann Abrams writes, "It was a natural. He knew how to mix these elixirs and possessed the marketing skills that many others lacked, since the real secret of success in this potential moneymaker was owning the exclusive patents to products that could not be purchased elsewhere."[60]

Abrams' history of the Candler family, and in particular her attention to Asa, suggests that as Asa and Lucy's family grew so too did his ambition to be the provider for his family. Lucy and Asa eventually would have five children, and with each new mouth to feed came the need to provide for his family. Abrams observes:

> Not that pharmaceuticals wasn't an honorable profession. But frankly he was growing tired of dispensing pills and mixing concoctions, even though the patent

[59]Abrams, 30.
[60]Ibid., 33.

> medicines did provide some new avenues to explore. Still, there had to be something else, and he was determined to find it.[61]

As it turned out, that 'something else' was just a few blocks away in the notes of a pharmacist friend, Doc Pemberton. It's true that they were competing businessmen, but what Asa saw as wise investment, Pemberton saw as a hobby. Pemberton loved "tinkering with concoctions to heal everything from gout to high blood pressure."[62] But he didn't have the ambition or foresight to promote his concoctions.

One of Pemberton's tonics was an elixir made of water, sugar, extract of kola nut, caffeine, coca leaf, and a pinch of cocaine. It was a tasty drink the touted healing effects. Pemberton called it French Wine Coca and distributed it to a few local drugstores. It was a hit and quickly spread to other establishments, but Pemberton did not have the expertise to fully capitalize on the demand. 'Coca-Cola' got its catchy name from two of the product's ingredients, kola nut and coca leaf, and its distinct taste when carbonated water was added to the mixture.

Certainly Asa would have been aware of the success of the local concoction, but even if he was interested in purchasing the formula, he didn't have a soda fountain in his store. However, when he noticed a production stall and Pemberton's apparent lack of ambition to resuscitate the elixir, Asa offered to trade an investment in a local gas company for stock in Coca-Cola. Pemberton agreed. By April 1888, Asa had convinced the handful of other investors in Coca-Cola to join him in filing incorporation papers at the Fulton County Courthouse. Shortly thereafter, Candler acquired the majority of shares in Coca-Cola. For the next quarter-century, ingenuity combined with persistence and fortuitousness to produce one of the most recognizable brands in the world.

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[61]Abrams, 36.
[62]Ibid., 37.

Asa Griggs Candler, Jr., aka "Bud," "Buddie" (1880-1953)

Asa and Lucy Candler had five children, the second being Asa Jr., born August 27, 1880. Asa's namesake, who the family interchangeably called Buddie or Bud, was "an inquisitive and rambunctious boy" who "had trouble sitting still in school" and frequently "disrupted the routine" at home "with his unconventional pranks."[63] Second in line to a more mature, intelligent brother, and perhaps lost in the shuffle of a large family, Asa made his mark with his wit, levity, and pranks. His boyish chicanery included, for example, lowering his little brother down into a well, covering it over, and abandoning him there. He threatened to run away and join the circus, ironic considering the circus would come to him, later in life. Headstrong and adventurous, he often refused to cry during the routine paddlings delivered by his disciplinarian father.

Buddie was a lot to handle—"something of a holy terror"—especially with a busy father and a mother with a full house.[64] So he was sent to live with his aunt Florence—just like his father was when he was a boy—in Cartersville, where he attended Florence's school and received a strict regimen at her home. It was a unique environment in which he was the only boy in the school, which must have added to the feeling of exile. (No other Candler child was sent away to school until they were teenagers; Buddie was just eight years old.) Still, there was adventure to be had in between his studies, for even as a

[63]Abrams, 43.
[64]Graham and Roberts, 170. Graham wonders if his behavior wasn't to compensate for some learning disability.

boy, he was taught how to smoke and chew tobacco by his Uncle, a habit he continued until his final days, preferring cigars over cigarettes.[65]

Aunt Florence and Uncle Joe gave Buddie a good home and prepared him well for entrance to Emory College, where his older brother Howard matriculated in 1894 and his Uncle Warren had served as president for several years already. It was the fall of 1895 when Buddie, the outgoing prankster, joined his reserved older brother on the Oxford, Georgia, campus. Abrams explains, Buddie was a true handful, and in the very least was soaking up every moment of college chicanery. "Once he was accused of filling the chapel with hay and another time of taking a goat up to the chapel's belfry," writes Abrams.[66] "Then his uncle caught him smoking in his house, a taboo that only Buddie dared break."[67] Buddie got in trouble for riding his bike around campus and for making random, frivolous purchases. When he wasn't pushing his uncle's buttons he was harassing his older brother or wrangling others to join in the fun. Asa had no tolerance for such behavior, but was "determined to teach his sons frugality, hard work, piety, and moral fortitude."[68] He used guilt as his favorite disciplinary weapon so that each of his boys feared 'disappointing Papa.' To say the least, they were a handful for Uncle Walter, Asa's surrogate disciplinarian, who took them into his home in hopes of settling the frequent infighting, Buddies cutting-up, and both boys' slacking grades. But this was to no avail and, before long, Uncle Walter dismissed them from his home, to the great

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[65]Graham and Roberts add, "Although Asa, Sr., did try to market a Coca-Cola brand cigars (they flopped), tobacco was very much against his strict Methodist belief Asa would have preferred to keep Buddie at home, in a cage if necessary, than let him pick up 'that foul habit'." (170)
[66]Abrams, 64.
[67]Ibid.. Buddie hoped a chapel full of hay would mean no chapel services the next day. He was wrong. Uncle Warren conducted services on the front porch of the chapel while Buddie and his classmates stood in the rain. See Graham and Roberts, 173.
[68]Abrams, 70

displeasure of their father. Asa must have been further aggravated by Buddie's two expulsions.[69]

The boys soon settled into a cottage in Oxford and both managed to graduate but neither with distinction. The letters that record the conversations between Asa and his boys during this time and what is known of Buddie as a young man describe Buddie as "assertive, cheerful and not afraid to confront Asa, Sr.; yet more than any of the others, he could be effusive in his expressions of love."[70] "Like a friendly puppy," notes Abrams, "Buddie was naively sweet one minute and naughty the next."[71] It would be nice to say that his naughtiness waned as he matured, but it's more accurate to say that it matured into a penchant for adventure and flamboyance, even to the point of personal detriment and public nuisance, at times.

Asa Sr. was a family man and he was always hiring or dispatching a cousin or nephew or son to some business ad/venture, both near and far. And this was especially the case for his eldest sons. Asa trusted his family and took it upon himself to put as many of his relatives in good vocational standing as possible. Buddie's first major assignment after college—he graduated in June 1899 at the age of eighteen—was to be an assistant manager of the West Coast hub for Coca Cola manufacturing, sales, and shipping. For an adventurous young man, the West was filled with distractions. And it

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[69]See Graham and Roberts, 172. As the great-granddauther of Asa Jr., co-author Elizabeth Candler Graham's *The Real Ones* contains a great deal of anecdotal family memories, some of which are surely spot-on historically, and some of which have been stretch by years of storytelling. In her writing about Buddie, she mentions several events that I am unable to corroborate elsewhere; thus, when I feel a sense of uneasiness with the verity of a story, I mention that in footnotes. The reader should be advised too, however, that as a family member, it is quite possible that the opposite could be true; that is, as a family member, she has access to information that others would not. So it seems equally possible that the truth is being represented in all accuracy in some parts of *The Real Ones* while being exaggerated or misremembered in others.

[70]Abrams, 69.

[71]Ibid.

didn't help that his college roommate/rival and older brother Howard was dispatched by Papa to assist Buddie in Los Angeles. They clashed, and it wasn't just because Howard's arrival both confirmed and exposed the fact that Buddie was a pitiful manager. "By the early summer of 1900," writes Abrams, "Asa realized that his namesake was having serious problems handling the complex duties of managing, manufacturing, and marketing."[72] He was under-qualified, inexperienced, and overextended. It was just too much, especially considering Buddie's 'unsavory lifestyle' that included 'the wrong crowd.' Los Angeles in some ways was college 2.0 for the young man. Further, the Pacific Ocean offered its own distraction as it christened his love of the water and offered him the opportunity to earn his captains license.[73] For the rest of his life, the love of the sea and of sea crafts would stay with him, perhaps never more lively than during his time in California. Certainly Buddie meant well and wanted to please his father; he simply didn't have the maturity to handle the assignment. California was the land of his dreams and he never wanted to leave.

Failing as a business man and missed horribly by his family, Asa brought Buddie home and sent him to help resuscitate a failing cotton mill in semi-rural Hartwell, Georgia, a place Asa thought would limit his options for trouble. "In his new job," writes Abrams, "Buddie asked to be known as Asa Jr., a name that he hoped would establish him as a grownup."[74] (The family continued to refer to him as Buddie or Bud.) Asa Jr. arrived in Hartwell on September 4, 1900.

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[72]Abrams, 81.
[73]Graham and Roberts, 178. Graham and Roberts add: "His granddaughter, Nancy Candler Nutter, recalls, 'He always told us that his grandmother, Martha Candler, had taken him to the seashore as a little lad. His first sight of the huge Atlantic Ocean so impressed him that he remained intrigued by it all his life long." (178)
[74]Abrams, 82.

The mill offered a venue for Asa Jr. to remake himself. Asa Sr. kept a close eye on Jr., hoping that this would be the move that would turn him into the man that his father expected. On one visit to Hartwell, however, Asa Sr. was surely surprised to hear Jr. declare that he planned to 'marry a country girl' and had no plans of leaving Hartwell.[75] It wasn't just any country girl; it was Helen Magill, a blue-eyed redhead whose father, the local newspaper owner, was not too pleased to hear his daughter was about to marry a man with a reputation for trouble, even if it was in his past. Yet, they wed on July 16, 1901. Conspicuously absent from the ceremony was Helen's father. In stern protest, he, just like Lucy Elizabeth's father, refused to attend the wedding.

In the spring of 1902, Helen and Asa Jr. welcomed their first child, Lucy, but their firstborn did not come easily. The only doctor in Hartwell had moved to Texas, so Helen came to Atlanta to deliver her first child, arriving a few months prior so as to be settled. While staying with her in-laws, she was bitten by a family cat, and when the bite became infected Helen's health deteriorated to the point that they had to take the baby early. Premature by a few months, family memory has it that little Lucy was kept warm in an egg incubator that was reconfigured, sterilized, and made suitable for an infant.[76] (According to family memoirist, Elizabeth Candler Graham, the doctor who oversaw Lucy's birth and Helen's sickness, Dr. Hurt, published an article about the incubator and claimed it as the first baby incubator in the South.) Family lore has it that little Lucy was

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[75]In one of its retrospectives of Asa Jr.'s life, at the event of his death, one *Atlanta Constitution* reporter remembered: While he was in Hartwell he met and fell in love with Miss Helen Magill, daughter of the newspaper editor there, and as an engagement ring he gave her a small yellow diamond which he had won in the Hartwell turkey shoot. Although she was to have great wealth and priceless jewels later, Mrs. Candler clung to the turkey shoot ring until her death and would not allow her husband to replace it with a more expensive ring." See "Candler Developer of Wide Interests," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 12, 1953, p. 8, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.

[76]See Graham and Roberts, 185-86.

fed Coca-Cola with a dopper and "that's the reason she was alive."[77] After a few days Asa Sr. bought a goat, had it milked, and fed little Lucy goat's milk, for her mother was too ill to nurse. Lucy, of course, lived, but Helen never fully recovered from the ordeal, carrying with her the remnants of what would have been diagnosed as 'cat scratch fever.'

Two years later, they welcomed Asa III, but tragically just seven months later they lost him to flu like symptoms. A winter storm kept them shut-in up in Hartwell. Unable to reach medical help, their traditional remedies were no match for the fever that overtook the infant in just a few hours. "Losing his namesake," writes Abrams, "was such a tremendous blow to Asa [Sr.] that every family photograph made during the next decade included someone holding a portrait of the deceased baby."[78] Nine months later, however, Asa Jr. and Helen welcomed their third child, John Howard. With the cotton mill going belly up to mismanagement—this time, not by Asa Jr., but by the squanderings of a minority owner—Asa Jr., Helen, and their two little ones moved to Atlanta and took up residence on North Jackson Street.

Awaiting Asa Jr. upon his return to Atlanta was another assignment from dad. Real estate was booming in early 1904 Atlanta, and Asa Sr. saw it as a worthy investment. So he established the Candler Investment Company and appointed Asa Jr. supervisor of real estate purchases, an appointment that would set the pace for the rest of Jr.'s professional career.

In Los Angeles, Jr. had confronted his limitations as a businessman; in Hartwell, he grew; and once back in Atlanta he absolutely thrived in real estate.[79] With Sr.'s savvy

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[77]For the recounting of this family story, see Graham and Roberts, 185-86.
[78]Abrams, 104.
[79]See Ibid., 115-16: "In fact [Asa Sr.] and his namesake had little regard for the quagmires that might hinder their progress as they moved aggressively to purchase large swaths of downtown Atlanta for the

decision making and Jr.'s high tolerance for risk, the investment company thrived. (It certainly didn't hurt that Jr. had studied civil engineering at Emory and learned surveying in Cartersville.[80]) As Sr.'s ventures in real estate proved successful and Asa Jr. became more established, he ran a few failed campaigns for local public office, what was surely his chance to grab a bit of the family lime light. In the first he withdrew for fear of the tough competition; in the second he lost in the Democratic primary. Both were campaigns for city alderman. "Not deterred by the setback and still determined to be noticed," writes Abrams, "he joined the Atlanta Automobile and Good Roads Association."[81] And in the summer of 1907, Asa Jr. was named the association's treasurer, sealing both his fascination with cars and his desire for the limelight. A few years later, the Association named him the president of the proposed new speedway, a perfect fit for the businessman who had a reputation for speed.

Autoracing had been around for more than a decade, but it was a relatively futuristic pastime in Atlanta. With his eye on that horizon, Asa Sr. petitioned the Atlanta Chamber of Congress (of which he was president) to spearhead sponsorship of a large car show in Atlanta, to which they agreed enthusiastically. "In conjunction with the exhibition," writes Abrams, "a group of businessmen agreed to build a two-mile racetrack on land the Candlers owned south of the city near the town of Hapeville."[82] The track cost $400,000 to build and was compared to the likes of the Indianapolis Speedway.[83]

Candler Investment Company. During February and March of 1908, for example, they bought a theater, seven stores, and an office building. Under Asa Jr.'s daring oversight—tempered by his father's scrupulous supervision—the Candlers were becoming synonymous with high-profile real estate trading…."

[80]Graham and Roberts, 187.

[81]Abrams, 113.

[82]Ibid., 126. Graham and Roberts write, "At Buddie's urging, Asa decided to develop a racetrack for automobiles. In August, 1909, they purchased three hundred acres in Hapeville, Georgia, just ten miles out of Atlanta, which Buddie had located and optioned. The tract cost $77,674.28." (190)

[83]Graham and Roberts, 190.

Once the track was built, celebrity drivers arrived with their futuristic machines. Asa Jr., no slouch behind the wheel himself, jumped in the driver seat a time or too as well, showing off his Pope-Toledo before adoring fans and mesmerized journalists.

Two-hundred vehicles arrived in Atlanta for the exhibition, which opened on November 6, 1909. Automobile Week was a huge success, especially for the younger Asa. "Automobile Week transformed Asa Jr. the once-undisciplined Buddie," writes Abrams.[84] "His phenomenal success in spearheading and managing the Atlanta Speedway made him a celebrity with an established place in the community, separate from—albeit tangential to—his father's financial empire."[85] After the success of Automobile Week (and a wide appreciation for Atlanta Speedway), Asa Jr. was a mainstay, not only in the Atlanta automotive world, but in the headlines of the local papers, which would now track his every move as a bona fide Atlanta celebrity. (Still, while Asa Jr.'s star was rising, the speedway proved less successful in the long run and closed after its first season.[86]) The Asas, nonetheless, had brought an exciting event to Atlanta, and Jr. was already being compared to his much more successful and well-respected father:

> He was clearly demonstrating his father's ingenuity and drive, as evidenced by a column in the *Atlanta Constitution*…. "Young men of the type of Asa G. Candler, Jr. are a credit to any community," the reporter commented. "Wide awake at all times, progressive in everything he undertakes, with intuition to seize upon things, Mr. Candler ranks with the best of the businessmen of Atlanta today." As the son of "one of the city's leading financiers, bankers, and capitalists," he "inherits all his good qualities."[87]

Asa Jr. was a success.

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[84]Abrams, 129.
[85]Ibid.
[86]Graham and Roberts, 191.
[87]*Atlantic Constitution*, November 27, 1910, quoted in Abrams, 130.

By 1911, Asa Jr.'s and Helen's household was full, and their bank account was comfortable enough to move to a larger home, which they had done a few times already to accommodate an expanding household and to complement an expanding income. This would be the site of their most extraordinary and final home as a complete family. To that end, Asa Jr. and Helen purchased a 42-acre plot (from Asa Sr.) that was just over a mile north of Ponce de Leon Avenue, off Williams Mill Road. Deep in the woods of a burgeoning Druid Hills, it was a rolling lot that had been used most recently as a working farm. A half-century prior, from July 20 to 21, 1864, Major General John Schofield, commander of the Army of the Ohio, made camp in this approximate location under the direction of General Sherman and the Union's campaign against Atlanta.[88] Given the size of Sherman's troops – estimates exceed 100,000 – it's entirely likely that many camped on the very property where the Candlers would build their home.[89]

Asa Sr. had acquired it as farmland on which he raised chickens and grew (or had grown) fruits and vegetables. There, Asa Jr. and Helen built a suitable farmhouse. When their five bedroom home has was completed in 1912, Asa Jr. called it "Briarcliff," which

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[88]Georgia Historical Commission, "Closing the Gap," #044-29, historical marker, western side of Briarcliff Road between University Drive and North Decatur Road, Atlanta, Georgia, 1954. Historical marker, western side of Briarcliff Road between University Drive and North Decatur Road, Atlanta, Georgia, 1954. The full inscription reads: "July 20, 1864. A critical factor in the alignment of Federal troops moving on Atlanta, from Peachtree Creek valley, was a wide gap between Peachtree Rd. (the left of Thomas' forces) & Schofield's 23d A.C. posted at the intersection of N. Decatur & Briarcliff roads. To fill this gap, Stanley's & Wood's 4th A.C. divs. were moved S.E. from Buckhead. Crossing S. Fork Peachtree Cr. at Durand's Mill, Wood's div. was deployed W. on Rock Spring Rd.; Stanley's, in the valley W. of here & Schofield's 23 A.C. prolonged Stanley's line southward. Sherman directed placement of these troops from his h'dq'rs at the crossroads July 20, 21." See also Daniel A. Pollock, "The Battle of Atlanta: History and Remembrance," *Southern Spaces*, May 30, 2014, accessed September 15, 2013. http://southernspaces.org/2014/battle-atlanta-history-and-remembrance: "Sherman, traveling with Major General John M. Schofield's Army of the Ohio on the Federal left wing, had moved his headquarters early on July 20 to what is now the northwest corner of North Decatur and Briarcliff Roads."

[89]See John E. McKay, "Atlanta Campaign," in *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, edited by David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 129.

was the name previously given to the farm. Not long thereafter, Williams Mill Road would be known as Briarcliff Road.

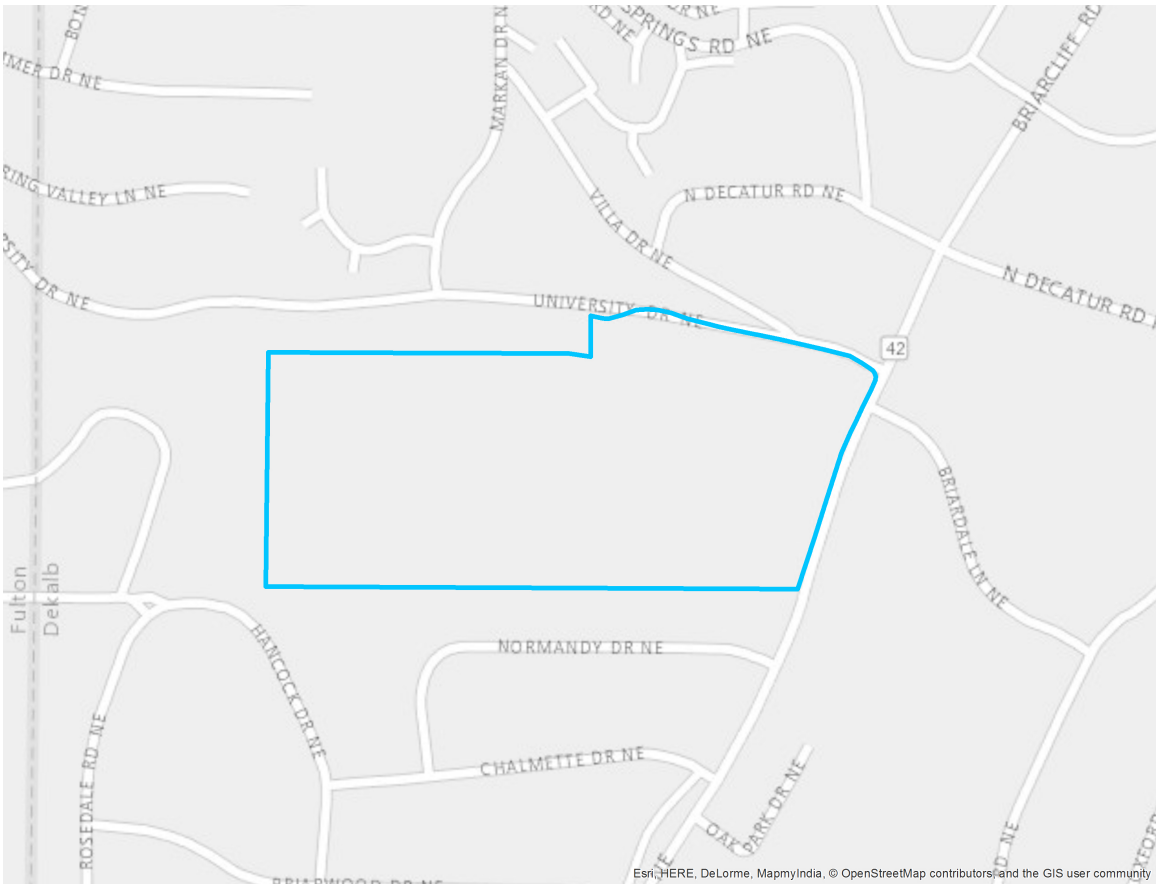

Figure 3. Map of approximate area of 42-acre plot, located at the intersection of University Drive NE and Briarcliff Road NE in DeKalb County, GA.[90]

Asa's and Helen's modest home was suitable for a family of seven, and in some ways Briarcliff echoed some of the self-sustaining characteristics of both his and his father's childhood homes.[91] "Determined to be self-sufficient" like his parents and grandparents "Asa Jr. not only provided his family's food, but he also dug his own well

[90]This is a map of the current Briarcliff Campus lot, which is likely not an exact match to the original plot. ESRI, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.
[91]Asa Jr.'s childhood home on Seaboard Avenue sat on twenty-five wooded acres. Along with a one-story clapboard and a smokehouse was a farm full of horses, pigs, goats, and cows and a garden replete with green beans, Irish potatoes, peas, squash, cabbage, watermelon, corn, and cantaloupe. Abrams writes, "Howard Candler had vivid memories of Lucy Elizabeth putting up the garden's produce in mason jars and of his father butchering, skinning, and dressing a hog, after which his mother ground the entrails for sausage. In the Fall, Asa gathered apples from his orchard and made cider in an old wooden press…." (34)

to supply them with water," writes Abrams.[92] "Most of all," she adds, "he now had ample space to accommodate his latest expensive hobby: breeding and exhibiting specimen hens, roosters, and pigeons," a hobby that would mature to eccentric proportions.[93] Asa Jr. and Helen could not get along without an assisting staff, for while they probably had it in their skillset to manage a farm and household, Helen and Asa Jr. were now city folk with the financial means to manage a household with hired help.

By January 1916, the thrill of running Coca-Cola and building its burgeoning international business had waned for Asa Sr., who was then in his mid-60s. When he announced to the board his retirement, new executive officers were named, and Asa Jr. became a vice president of real estate dealings. In November of the following year Asa Sr., by then mayor of Atlanta, relinquished all remaining control of Coca-Cola by transferring his stock in the company to his children. Asa Jr. received sixty-one shares, eight shy of each of his siblings' on account of a debt owed to his father.

In 1917, Asa established Asa G. Candler, Inc., "as a holding company to develop and manage real property investments" of which included "forty pieces of choice real estate as its initial assets."[94] Asa G. Candler Inc., included several buildings in Atlanta but also had property in Chicago and Manhattan. Asa Jr. spent part of his time overseeing the finance, building, and management of these properties.

Asa Sr.'s term as mayor lasted only two years. "He was worn out," writes Abrams.[95] "Two exhausting years as mayor, complicated by his wife's declining health,

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[92]Abrams, 145.
[93]Ibid.
[94]Graham and Roberts, 188.
[95]Abrams, 182.

had taken its toll on a man now approaching his sixty-seventh birthday."[96] Lucy Elizabeth's health was indeed declining, as she was restricted to bed rest by a cancer that was killing her. Trips to Johns Hopkins Hospital and to the Hot Springs of Virginia did little to improve her condition over two years of the disease, and on February 22, 1919, Asa Sr. became a widower. Four years later, he quietly married a significantly younger Mae Little Ragin, his second and last wife, who he described as a worthy woman and comforting companion.[97] Candler historian, Ann Uhry Abrams, writes, "Shunned by the family from the moment Asa married her, May was henceforth ignored and [upon Asa's death] ultimately ostracized by all the Candlers."[98]

Not long after the loss of Lucy Elizabeth, the five Candler children were approached by investors wishing to buy Coca-Cola, and on September 12, 1919, Coca-Cola was purchased by the Trust Company of Georgia for $25,000,000 under the direction of the Trust's president Ernest Woodruff, whose family along with the Candlers would become the founding dynasties of Coca-Cola.[99]

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[96]Abrams, 182. She adds, "Even if he had not been restricted by law from running again, he knew it was time to quit and savor what little pleasure he could from laudatory remarks about his accomplishments in the press or in public address. Many applauded the way he reduced Atlanta's debt by trimming down several departments and showing them how to operate more efficiently. Most importantly, they commended his strong and steady leadership during the worst fire in the city's history and the most widespread and devastating war the world had then known." (182)

[97]Asa Sr. was also briefly engaged to a New Orleans socialite, Onezima de Bouchelle. When he called it off she sued him for breach of contract but lost the claim for $500,000 worth of damages.

[98]Abrams, 246.

[99]From 1904 to 1922, Ernest Woodruff was president of the Trust Company of Georgia, and it was he who negotiated the deal with the Candlers. Woodruff was a prominent businessman in Atlanta who, in partnership with his brother-in-law Joel Hurt, started the Atlanta and Edgewood Street Railroad. Though not as prominent as the Candler name at the time, Woodruff was well known for his business acumen, and his name would carry on as the second major dynasty at the helm of Coca-Cola. A curious note is that because Woodruff and Asa were rivals in Atlanta business, the children kept talks of the sale from him until the deal was final. Expectedly Asa was crushed. Abrams writes, "Asa Jr.'s daughter Laura remembered that when her grandfather came to their house for dinner after the sale, he could not stop crying about the transaction." (187)

The Candler children's $25 million was split into 60% cash, 40% preferred stock. Each of the Candler children was well-off up to this point, or at least comfortable, but with the sale of Coca-Cola they were each officially millionaires, five times over. And they each spent their millions in their own ways. Asa Jr. earmarked his funds for a hundred-foot sea yacht, another floating vessel refitted to become a floating school, several airplanes, a zoo, and a palatial Georgian-revival home, which was completed in 1922, and built on the site of the original farmhouse. This home, a mansion, would become one of *the* venues of the Atlanta social scene of the 1920s, with frequent guests that included the likes of Harry Houdini, the world-renowned magician that likely played a large part in Asa Jr.'s love of entertaining houseguests with magic tricks of his own.[100]

In the summer of 1924, Helen's and Asa Jr.'s eldest Lucy married a former University of Georgia and New York Yankees catcher, Homer Thompson. As seems to be one of the traditions in the Candler family, Helen and Asa Jr. disapproved of Homer, but as was also a tradition, Lucy proceeded all the more. Regardless of whether Homer was the Candler's number one pick, Asa Jr. and Helen would give him (and Lucy) the royal treatment for their wedding. They spared no expenses.

For fear of rain during the actual ceremony, the Candlers built a pavilion off the southern side of the mansion, connected to the main house by a portico that doubled as a covered entrance for arriving visitors. The wedding was the talk of the town, "one of the

[100]See Graham and Roberts, 200: "Buddie had learned the tricks from Houdini with the promise to the master magician that he would never divulge them, and he never did." They add that he also befriended a renowned illusionist, Howard Thurston, and stored his magic supplies in the third floor ballroom. He had learned this skills of cutting a person in half or making them disappear.

highlights of the social scene of the '20s."[101] It was an *al fresco* affair in the sunken gardens to the south of the 'big house' that was beautifully lit by Japanese lanterns. With the family connection to Coca-Cola now null, Asa Jr. left Coca-Cola and continued his real estate ventures under the moniker of his Briarcliff Investment Company, an outfit that boasted as many as thirty-three apartment buildings at its height. Like his father, Asa Jr. was successful at real estate.

Meanwhile, Helen, still suffered from the blood poisoning incurred during her first pregnancy, Helen finally succumbed to the blood disorder—Cat scratch fever—that had been with her for two decades. Funeral services were held at her and Asa Jr.'s home, Briarcliff, and she was buried at Westview Cemetery, which Asa Jr. had recently purchased.[102] Nine months later, in October 1927, Asa Jr. married Florence Stephenson, his much younger personal secretary, in a small ceremony at Briarcliff.[103] "Their marriage was considered a scandal in an era when one was expected to give a deceased spouse the honor of a year of mourning," write Graham and Roberts.[104] Regardless of the seemingly poor timing of the wedding, the fact that she was much younger, the fact

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[101]Yolande Gwin, "Briarcliff Is on Farm Site," A Candler Lived Here series, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 6 Feb 1972, 16-G.

[102]Asa Jr. actually purchased the entire cemetery, not just a plot, an expense presumably included in the cemetery sale.

[103]The Candler family history is riddled with recurring, sometimes scandalous themes, among them mental illness, disapproval of spousal selection, and older Candler men marrying much younger women, some of who were former employees of their new husbands. It is likely the latter two themes that led to Florence's and Asa Jr.'s wedding being a quiet affair with only four people attending. In fact, this aspect of Asa Jr.'s marriage was worthy of an Associated Press article. The article was titled "Asa Candler, Jr., Follows the Family Tradition; Employe (sic) is His Bride Atlanta Yesterday," and it begins, "The romance of the working girl who marries the millionaire employer is to come true again this month in the Candler family." It notes that Asa Jr., was "following in the footsteps of his father and younger brother, who startled society by marrying employe." It goes on to explain, "About six years ago, Walter, the third son, married Miss Marion Penland, a pretty girl who presided over a window in the bank of which he was cashier and his father president. Then in 1923, Asa Candler, Sr., suddenly married Mrs. Mae Little Ragan, who had been his stenographer." See "Asa Candler, Jr., Follows the Family Tradition; Employe is His Bride Atlanta Yesterday," October 15, 1927, Emory University Special Collections, Collection 4, Box 2, Folder 2.

[104]Graham and Roberts, 211.

that he was her employer—which "startled society"—and the fact that none of his children attended the ceremony, the Candler family would come to both embrace and love Asa Jr.'s second (and last) wife.[105] However, it did take some time for their bitter resentment to subside, and it is unclear if their acceptance of her was genuine or motivated by the fact that to reject her would be to risk their inheritance.[106]

The celebration would be short lived. In October 1926, Asa Sr. suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed, mute, bed-ridden, and confined to the hospital until the end of his life. (The same year Asa Jr. took over his father's position as president of the Druid Hills Corporation, a title the latter had held since 1908.) Asa Sr. was no longer fit to be the president of anything; he was deteriorating. He spent his seventy-fifth, seventy-sixth, and seventy-seventh birthday in the same hospital, no doubt with family abounding. After many false alarms, the man who was named "Atlanta's first citizen" died on March 12, 1929.[107] Only his daughter Lucy was in attendance. Asa Jr. was in Europe.

One of the family's real estate holdings was the Hapeville racetrack, called Candler Field, which doubled as a landing strip for the burgeoning aviation industry. By the mid-20s, the need for repair at Candler Field was such that "few planes could land there."[108] "When the [Atlanta city] councilmen finally decided that Atlanta needed a descent landing strip," explains Abrams, "the debate shifted to whether the city should purchase and rehabilitate Candler Field or construct a new airport someplace else."[109] In

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[105]See previous note.
[106]See Graham and Roberts, 212: "Buddie's insensitivity to his wife Helen's feelings during her last years and to the feelings of his children cause a rift that never really healed. Because he held the purse strings, his children accepted his second marriage, but they never liked Florence and seemed to feel that she had come between them and their rightful inheritance."
[107]" Candler Is Declared City's 'First Citizen,'" January 10, 1923, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.
[108]Abrams, 249.
[109]Ibid., 250.

a display of business acumen that perfectly reflected his father's influence, Asa Jr. offered the city a deal it couldn't refuse: if the city would pay the taxes of the 300 acres, it was theirs to use. Asa Jr. would retain ownership of the land and have it developed on someone else's dime. One council member in particular, William B. Hartsfield, was especially instrumental in persuading the rest of the council to take Asa Jr.'s offer; so it is fitting that his name is retained in legacy in the naming of what is now the busiest airport in the world, Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

Expansions and repairs were carried out but still lagged behind other developing Southern cities, and when pilots and airline companies began to complain of the unsatisfactory conditions, the city was forced to act.[110] "Worried that Atlanta would be overshadowed by another city," writes Abrams, "municipal authorities agreed to purchase Candler Field in the spring of 1929 for $94,500, slightly less than the $100,000 Asa Jr. had requested."[111] That was about enough money for Asa Jr. and Florence to purchase the first of their several aircrafts.

With the city airport much improved, Asa Jr. caught the flying bug. As Ann Uhry Abams suggests, "Asa Jr. was one of the first Atlantans to throw himself into flying, exhibiting the same zest, excessive spending, and eye for publicity that characterized all of his enthusiasms."[112] Another report names him as the first Georgian to own a private

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[110]One company in particular, Pitcairn Aviation, "designated Atlanta as a possible base for mail and passenger service, but only on the condition that the unlighted and uneven runways be properly reconstructed," writes Abrams. "If the airport remained unsatisfactory," she adds, "the company announced it would locate its southeastern center elsewhere." The pressure worked; Atlanta got its act together and secured Pitcairn as a result. See Abrams, 250.

[111]Abrams, 250.

[112]Ibid. In fact, a cursory review of newspaper clippings about Asa Griggs Candler, Jr. found in Emory University's MARBL collection show that the single most representative subject in newspaper photographs (and at times, headlines) is Asa Jr.'s airplanes.

airplane.[113] (While he never learned to fly, he developed a long relationship with Beeler Blevins who was one of his pilots until a car accident took his life in 1934.)[114] The same drive that put him behind the wheel of his racecars, led him to the cockpit. Or, perhaps it is better to say cockpit*s*. Over the next few years, Asa Jr. spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on flight, purchasing an impressive collection of crafts—including a maroon Waco open-cockpit biplane, a Lockheed Vega monoplane with room for seven, and a low-wing Lockheed Orion that topped out at 220mph—traveling such impressive lengths that the *Atlanta Constitution* seems to have noted each one in their paper. Asa Jr. even got his kids involved in the fun, buying them flight lessons and planes of their own when they were ready. Apparently, the Great Depression offered little trouble to Asa Jr. as he continued to live lavishly. In fact, Ann Uhry Abrams, finds no evidence that the Depression in any significant way hurt the Candler fortunes.[115]

Asa Jr. was always very civically active. Twice running for public office, he held many private leadership positions, both of corporations and of civic organizations. Among them were the National Cemetery Association (Director, three years) and the Atlanta Athletic Club (President and presented with gold life membership card).[116]

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[113]"Asa Candler Jr. Dies," Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.
[114]Graham and Roberts suggest another man as well who they refer to as Asa Jr.'s "full-time pilot," E. W. Hightower. (218)
[115]Graham and Roberts write: "America was on a great binge in the 1920s.... However, Buddie had a premonition that the excess of the 1920s could not last. On a European cruise in the summer of 1929, Buddie wired his broker to sell everything in which he did not have a controlling interest. Knowing Buddie's propensity for heavy drinking, his broker wired back more than once for confirmation of the order until he received Buddie's last wire, 'Do it or you're fired.' As a result of this astute move, Buddie did not lose heavily on 'Black Friday'."
[116]See *Atlanta Journal*, October 3, 1946, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 2. See also "Pres. Asa G. Candler, Jr. Presented With Gold Life Card By Athletic Club," Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family scrapbook).

Alcoholism

Asa Jr. was a drinking man. Though it was functional at times and did not directly affect his public life for many years, family members noticed; he was drinking too often and too much. "What had begun in the late teens as a problem," assisted by the death of his mother and the egging-on of Prohibition, "was by the early 1920s a near-desperate situation in the minds of the eldest children," write Graham and Roberts.[117] "He would drink until he would be in such a state," they add, "that the family, fearing for his life, would ask his friend and physicians, Dr. John Hurt, to give him something to help him recover from the alcohol poisoning."[118] Surely tragedy, celebrity, and wealth contributed to Asa Jr.'s drinking and depression. Candler historian Ann Uhry Abrams suggests that it was after his inheritance and during the free-spending 1920s that Asa Jr.'s lifestyle began to get out of hand.

His family clearly saw the problem and its effects on Helen. "His wife bore the real brunt of his drinking," suggests Abrams, "which often led to public misconduct and overt womanizing."[119] With an ailing wife at home—Helen's health was declining—and with a thirst for adventure that often kept him from home, a "parade of female companions began," which was certainly exacerbated by his addiction to alcohol.[120] The family was taking notice with concern of his blatant affairs as well. "Buddie was seen all

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[117]Graham and Roberts, 204.
[118]Ibid., 221. They continue, "After being called away from a dinner party one time too many, Dr. Hurt finally delivered his ultimatum. 'Buddie, you're my friend, but you are killing yourself and I can't help you. So don't call me again. If you stop drinking, you might live to old age, if you don't you'll be dead within a year."
[119]Abrams, 241.
[120]Graham and Roberts, 203.

over town with women," write Graham and Roberts, "but by late 1924, early 1926, it was one woman in particular," his secretary, Florence Stephenson.[121]

Asa Jr. always had a penchant for flamboyance, speed, and excess. "In many ways," she writes, "Asa Jr. personified the decade's popular stereotype, living recklessly and drinking heavily, often taking extended cruises in his newest yacht, *Amphirtrite.*"[122] By the 1930s, Asa Jr.'s alcoholism was catching up with him (and his affected family). He was raised as a man of religion, by a teetotalling father, but years of trying to pray his way to sobriety failed.

According to Asa Jr., it was an act of God, an epiphany really, that led to his finally getting clean. "One day, riding home 'half drunk' in the back of his chauffeur-driven car, he said a voice told him: 'You must get rid of your self; you must renounce your self; you must reject your self,'" writes Abrams.[123] In a published confession, he attributed his alcoholism to pride and referred to alcohol as a barrier between himself and God. "With this revelation," adds Abrams, "he suddenly became religious, immersed himself in church activities, developed close clerical friendships, and made a public confession of his alcoholism and subsequent redemption."[124] His children, it seems, may not have had such luck, for as his great-granddaughter writes, "Buddie had given up drink and taken up religion, but four of his six children could not or would not," adding that "only his two older daughters, Lucy and Laura, managed to escape the clutches of demon rum and have what could be called a normal life."[125] On the other hand, Asa Jr. is

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[121]Graham and Roberts, 204.
[122]Abrams, 249.
[123]Ibid., 268.
[124]Ibid.
[125]Graham and Roberts, 223.

thought to have remained sober for the rest of his life, placing a bottle of whiskey, with a red ribbon tied around it, atop his mantle as a reminder.

Asa Jr.'s sobering up did not signal the end of his passionate obsessions with eccentric adventures. For example, with the same penchant for extravagance, in the late 40s it was large game hunting that caught his eye, flying all over the world to decorate his walls with exotic animals busts. In the summer of 1949, upon returning from a hunting expedition in Africa, Asa Jr. discovered that yet one of his businesses was in trouble, Westview Cemetery. Put more succinctly, it was a nasty, embarrassing, public mess. In the process of an extended 'beautification project'—during which Asa Jr. failed to acquire proper permits—several relatives of those buried complained that the Candlers (Florence was a co-manager with Asa Jr.) were mishandling the renovation and actually causing more harm than improvement. Desecration of graves was among the charges, and it ran as frontpage news for weeks. With as many as a dozen suits in the litigation pipeline, the Candlers sold the property to an outside company for $2 million dollars. It would be his last major business transaction.[126]

In the fall of 1952, Asa Jr. was diagnosed with cancer of the liver, the very organ he had punished from decades of drinking. After surgery proved to come much too late, he died just a few months later at the age of seventy-two. Undoubtedly he lived a full and extravagant life. "He was a man of large idiosyncrasies," remembered one eulogist, and "a man of large generosities."[127] Upon his death, newspapers across the country

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[126]It seems that around 1950, Asa Jr. sold much of the real estate that made up his Briarcliff Investment Company. See "Candler Developer of Wide Interests," 8.

[127]"The Name of Asa Candler is Part of Our History," *Atlanta Journal*, January 12, 1953, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.

carried his obituary, and it was not just because of the reported $2 million he left behind.[128]

They remembered his love of fast horses, faster cars, and even faster planes. They remembered his love of the sea, his many boats, his construction of the Thunderbolt Yacht Basin in Savannah, Georgia, and his fishing trips to Lake Altoona in his later years.[129] They remembered his Sunday school lessons, his commitment to the United Methodist Church, and his philanthropy, especially to the church and Emory University. And they remembered his love of gadgets, vehicles, and the newest shiny objects.[130] But they also remembered the many controversies. His ventures, wrote one eulogist, were often "storm centers" of problems.[131]

Elizabeth Candler Graham, author of the family memoire *The Real Ones*, remembers her great-grandfather as a "creative and eccentric" man who "tried fitting into the mold society demanded but couldn't. So he laughingly went his own way."[132] Distinguished against his brother Buddie, Asa Jr. was the adventurous individual of the bunch. "Buddie was just Buddie;" Graham recalls, "but, in a way, he soared to heights that others in the family, more worried about responsibilities and appearances, dared not try."[133] The man known by his family as just 'Buddie' was "an inveterate showman"

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[128]"Candler Will Said to Top $2 Million" *Constitution*, Jan 17, 1953; Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.
[129]Granddaughter Nancy Candler Nutter remembers: "He loved the ocean and kept a boat, yacht that is, at some nearby body of water most of the time. He developed the Savannah Marina [Thunderbolt Basin] and had two boats, which burned at the dock there; the *Martha* and the *Helasa*. He had boats he kept at Panama City, Florida. I accompanied him to Panama City to present a trophy following a regatta in 1951." See Graham and Roberts, 199. For more on Asa's fishing, see Graham and Roberts, 233.
[130]Nancy Candler Nutter remembers his purchasing the first consumer video camera and his avid use of it with his family and travels. See Graham and Roberts, 199. When radios came along, he bought the best of the best and would listen in amazement for hours. See Graham and Roberts, 200.
[131]"Candler Developer of Wide Interests," 8.
[132]Graham and Roberts, 169
[133]Ibid.

who "made a statement of style in everything he did."[134] In some of those statements, his enthusiasm and style got him into trouble. His wealth allowed him every open door possible; so it is perhaps no surprise that Nancy Candy Nutter remembers her grandfather as a man who "did as he pleased for most of his seventy-two years."[135]

His funeral was at Westview where he was laid to rest among family members. Candler historian, Ann Uhry Abrams, describes his life and character:

> The Janus-like quality of Asa G. Candler Jr.'s unique personality instigated accolades on the one hand and lawsuits on the other. Innately kind and creative, he maintained his childlike and open personality throughout his life, attracting young and old. His grandchildren reminisce nostalgically about his generosity as well as his eccentricity. In the course of his peripatetic life, Asa Jr. proved to be a bighearted friend to people around the world, but the impetuousness—which haunted his life from start to finish—seemed to court calamity. Some quirk in his makeup prevented the "Buddie" component from considering the consequences of his reckless pursuits. And with a fortune to spend (and waste), he could always command a loyal following to comply with his unpredictable whims. For those who knew him, both casually and intimately, he was one of life's most unforgettable characters.[136]

Asa Jr. was a unique man who was both protected by and perhaps cursed by the wealth of his family. His appetite for adventure and his eccentric ventures are what he is remembered for today. And while it is true that some of the eulogists who remembered Asa Griggs Candler Jr. wrote in near hagiographic form, it remains also true that his contributions are still felt in Atlanta some sixty years after his death.[137]

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[134]Graham and Roberts, 169.
[135]Ibid.
[136]Abrams, 291.
[137]One potentially hagiographic claim that cannot be proven one way or the other is the claim that "during the early part of the 1900s, Buddie spent a good bit of his money paying to rescue Jews from the pogroms in Russia." See Graham and Roberts, 189.

Briarcliff

Asa Candler transferred his shares of Coca-Cola to his children in 1916. (Even with his personal stock in the company split amongst his children, Asa Sr. was thought to still have an annual income of over $1 million, making him one of the fifty richest men in America.)[138] When his children sold those shares to Ernest Woodruff in 1919, those five children—Howard, Asa Jr., Lucy, Walter, and William—each received $3 million in cash and an additional $2 million in preferred stock. Today, this would be the equivalent of over $41 million in cash and more than $27 million in stock. Asa Jr. and his siblings were officially loaded, and it appears he, more than the rest, "found the most lavish and adventurous ways to spend his inheritance."[139]

After the sale of Coca-Cola, Asa Jr.'s largest purchase was the completion of his Briarcliff estate, the home of which was finished in 1922. The original home on the 42-acre campus was a mere five bedrooms. With six children ranging in age from five to seventeen and a staff of nannies, housekeepers, and gardeners, Asa Jr. "began planning a larger and grander house, one that better suited the country gentleman he had become."[140] Construction took a few years, during which Asa Jr. and Helen resided at what is now 901 Oakdale. The final unveiling of the new mansion coincided with the eldest child's (Lucy) public debut in January 1923.[141] ('Briarcliff', 'The Briarcliff', or 'Briarcliff Manor' were often used to name either the complete estate—all 42 acres—or just the mansion.) The family called it the 'big house', and it certainly was, with a staggering 22 rooms.

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[138]"Carroll County's Son, Asa G. Candler, The South's Richest Man," *The Carroll County Times*, December 21, 1922, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.
[139]Abrams, 249.
[140]Ibid., 191.
[141]Exact dates aren't available. It is believed that construction occurred between 1919 and 1922.

It was a palatial estate that originally included two large steel-framed glass greenhouses, a private Grecian pool, a hothouse, a water fountain, reflection pools, maintenance buildings, a large multi-car garage, an electric generating plant, and servants' quarters. Other, more extravagant additions came over the next decade, including a commercial laundry, two tennis courts, horse stables, a 9-hole golf course, a public pool, and a public zoo, the latter two of which were open to the public.[142]

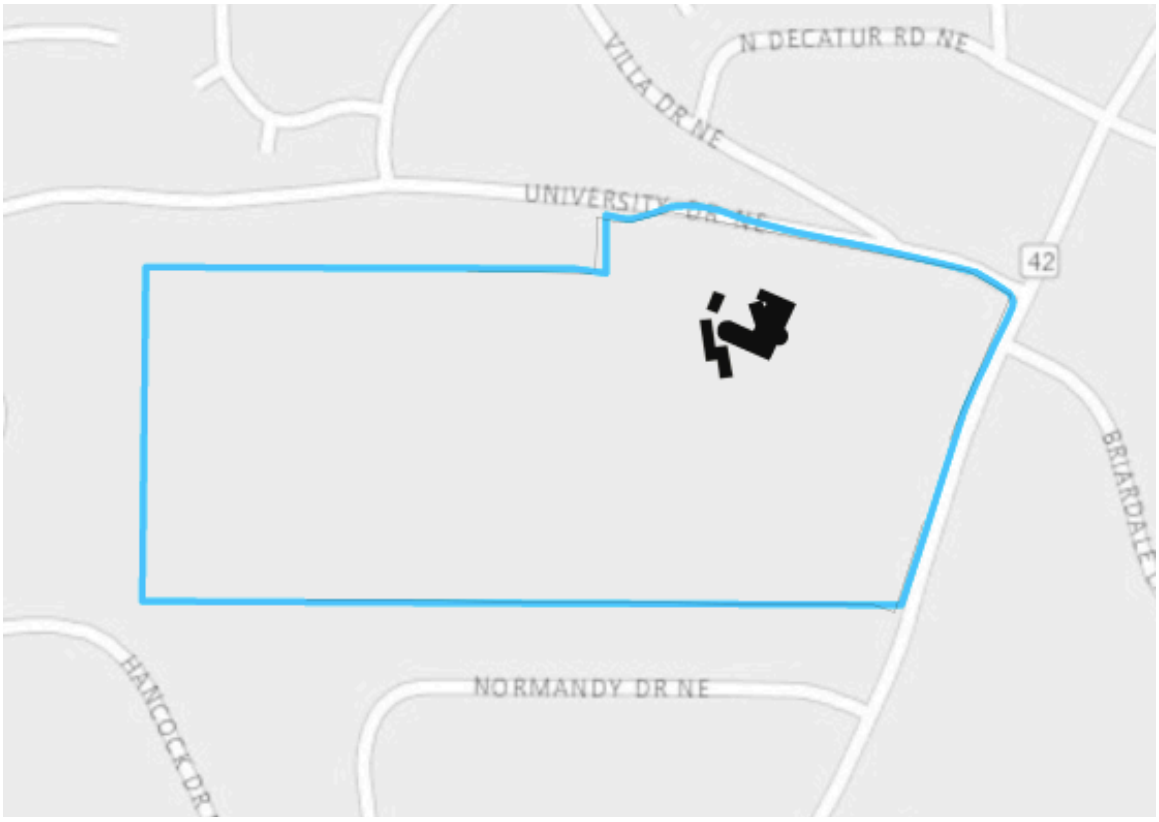

Figure 4. A map of the mansion, greenhouses, and servant quarters. From right to left, the mansion, the greenhouses, and the servant quarters, directly behind the mansion.[143]

[142]There is little information about the golf course but it seems that golf was a past time for both Asa Jr. and Helen, and they both played together on the Briarcliff golf course. See "Mrs. Candler *Flies* to Tea," *Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine*, February 16, 1930, p. 3, Emory University, Special Collections, Collection 4, Box 2, Folder 2. See also J.J. Williams, "Briarcliff," *The Druid Hills News*, 21, no. 3, p. 4.
[143]ESRI, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.

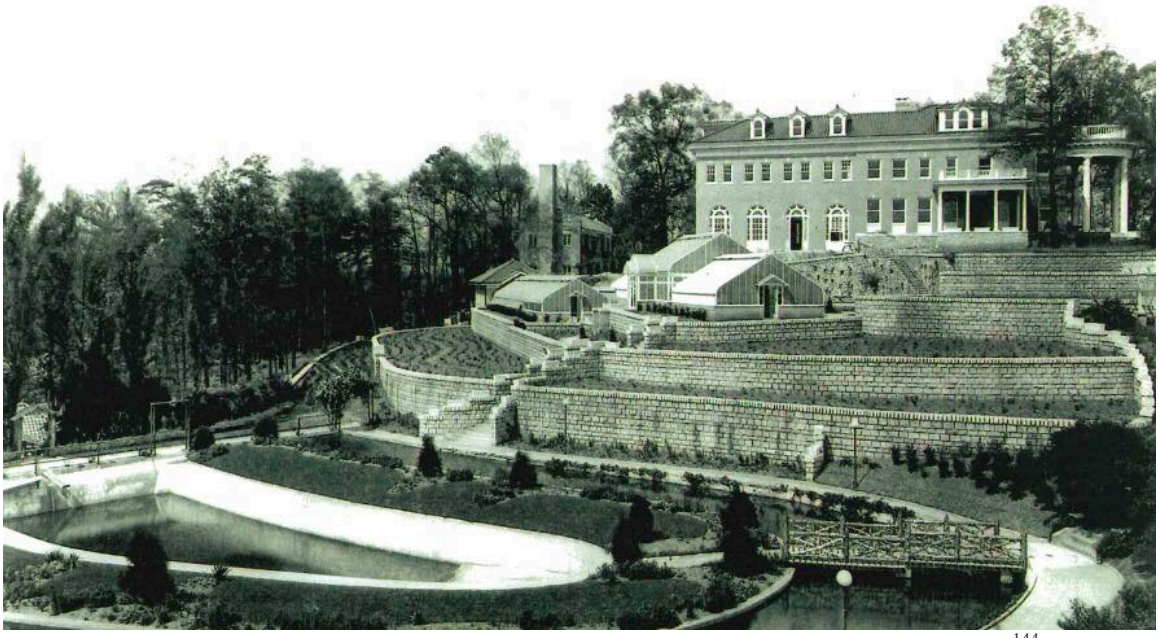

Figure 5. Photograph of Briarcliff's terraced gardens, greenhouse, and surrounding landscape.[144]

Creek Nation Land

The 42-acre plot has had an interesting and layered history that began, no doubt, as Native American land, most likely Creek. In 1821, via state lottery, the plot of land that would become Briarcliff (plot #55) was officially 'opened for settlement' following the epic struggles between the Creek and Cherokee Nations and the white settlers who sought to takeover their land, and were eventually successful by governmental decree, public sentiment, and military might.[145] On February 11, 1824, a 202.5-acre parcel of land was deeded to a James L. Askew of Baldwin County.[146] Sometime thereafter—

[144]This photo was taken between 1922 and 1924 when the pavilion on the southern side of the mansion was constructed. Image available at http://druidhills.org/2015/05/27/briarcliff-mansion-snapshot-history/.
[145]National Register of Historic Places, Briarcliff, Atlanta, DeKalb County, Georgia, 88001167, Section 8, Page 3.
[146]See "Deed 11 – February 1824" in "Documentation of a Historic Place," a supplemental document to the National Register application.

likely by 1890—the land was deeded to Asa Candler, Sr. and eventually to Asa Candler, Jr.[147]

Briarcliff Farm

In 1910, Asa Jr. purchased from his father the farmland that lay about a mile north of Ponce de Leon on (what was then) a dirt-covered Williams Mill Road. The farm itself is mentioned in the historical record only in passing as a venue for raising prize chickens and growing vegetables, but in fact the farm was much more significant.[148] Indeed, 'Briarcliff Farm' began as a "mammoth poultry plant" but was remodeled sometime in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century to be a more profitable dairy farm that would include 180 registered, purebred Holstein cattle.[149] The Candlers also raised sheep and pigs.

As a dairy farm, it was "a huge farming operation" that was "both self-sufficient and provided fresh produce and meats to local stores."[150] "When Buddie ran Briarcliff as a farm," write Graham and Roberts, "he expanded it into something a little more spectacular than your average farm. In addition to the usual produce and animals, Buddie

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[147]It is difficult to determine when Asa Sr. acquired the land. The deed records, included in "Documentation of a Historic Place," details more than two-dozen transactions over half as many years in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

[148]A well-circulated story about Asa Jr. is that sometime around 1912, he took a carload of chickens to the Alabama State Fair and made quite the show. In his possession were types of chickens worth up to $2000 a piece, some never before seen in that part of the world. Characteristic of Asa Jr., he left quite an impression on the fair-goers that year. See "Candler's Chickens Win Praise at Show," Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), *Eighth Annual Report of the United States Geological Survey*, 1886–87. Pt 1. Washington: GPO, 1889; the pages of the book were used as a family scrapbook. See also: "50 Years Ago Today," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 21, 1962, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.

[149]"Candler's Chickens Win Praise at Show"; the pages of the book were used as a family scrapbook. See also Graham and Roberts, 197: "It was a working farm at the time of [Asa Jr.'s] purchase and he continued to keep it as such. One of his little sidelines was a chicken and egg delivery business. Buddie began assembling the largest and most unusual collection of chickens ever seen in the South."

[150]J.J. Williams, 4.

did his farming on a big scale."[151] During the First World War, Asa Jr. "had a contract to supply Fort Gordon [in Augusta, Georgia] with milk from his dairy."[152] Clearly, this was no family garden with a few animals out back. At its height, the farm produced "pure milk, cream, buttermilk and pasteurized milk" that was "sold to its discriminating customers, which included many of the famous Atlanta hotels," no doubt many of the very properties owned by the Candlers.[153]

A write-up in a 1918 edition of *Electrical Review* confirms the significance of the farm. Noting the need for sanitation so as to preserve the livestock from becoming ill and to prevent the spread of disease such as tuberculosis, the *Review* states:

> Asa D. Chandler, Jr., (sic) owner of the Briarcliff dairy farm at Atlanta, Ga., may be considered by some as having gone to extremes in combating these effects, but he has found, nevertheless, that catering to these instincts of the cow has paid a very satisfactory return in the quantity and quality of the product. The furnishing of individual drinking-fountains and electric fans in the barn may seem too luxurious for cows to some, but when it is remembered that one cow, "Lizze," produces 44 quarts of extra pure milk daily since being kept in such a barn, the advantages are apparent.[154]

It is hardly surprising to learn that the *Electrical Review* boasts that Asa Jr.'s farm "is as modern and scientifically conducted as the most exacting customer would require."[155] Asa Jr. was a modern man with ambitions for the most efficient, the most state-of-the-art, and, of course, the most profitable. His dairy barn at Briarcliff was "provided with concrete floors, wooden blocks, electric lights and fans, steel frame stalls" and a rail was "installed over the feed pit for distributing the feed"—all apparently novel

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[151]Graham and Roberts, 198.
[152]J.J. Williams, 4.
[153]See "Use of Electricity on Dairy Farms to Increase Production," *Electrical Review*, 73, no. 26, December 28, 1918, p. 997.
[154]"Use of Electricity on Dairy Farms to Increase Production," 996.
[155]Ibid.

implementations.[156] Other cutting-edge technologies incorporated on the farm included automatic drinking fountains, milking machines, and an electrical bottling and pasteurizing system.

Considering the later instantiations of this land—hospital and office building—it seems uncanny to read the lighting system described as suitable for "the most modern office building" and the barn interior "reminds one a [sic] hospital ward."[157] It is unclear when dairy farming began on this site, or when it ended, but it seems certain that the dairy production couldn't have lasted much longer once the mansion was complete.[158] I would guess that the major farming operations ceased probably by the mid-twenties.[159]

Briarcliff Mansion

The farmhouse at Briarcliff Farm was a "rambling farm-style home which suited a large, rural-based family, but wasn't exactly up to modern standards, " observe Graham and Roberts.[160] Thus, in 1916, Asa Jr., contracted with architect Charles E. Frazier to construct a much larger home.[161] The National Register application—the application to place the home on the National Register of Historic Places—states that "the date that

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[156]"Use of Electricity on Dairy Farms to Increase Production." The article's purpose, it seems, is to celebrate (and promote) the hygienic advantages and profitability of a fully modern, fully electric agricultural outfit. To this end, the article goes to great lengths to name all of the modern components of the farm: floors, walls, and ceilings of concrete; Westinghouse ceiling fans for summer cooling and winter ventilation; and an electric feed to the corn silos.

[157]Ibid., 996.

[158]At some point Asa Jr. became part owner of the Miller Union Stockyards of Atlanta, but there is little information available about his involvement in the "principal stockyards of the south." Perhaps it was merely an investment, but one wonders whether the mule, cattle, pig, and horse stock at Miller Union had any relationship with his Briarcliff Farm. See "Asa Candler, Jr., Part Purchaser of Stock Yards," *Associated Press*, Chicago, November 10, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 2. See also Marietta Street Artery, "Miller Union Stock Yards," accessed October 11, 2013. http://www.artery.org/MillerUnionStockYard.htm.

[159]Graham and Roberts elude to the farm continuing in some form into the 1940s: "With the onset of World War II, life became less lavish…. While Briarcliff continued as a self-sufficient farm…." (227)

[160]Graham and Roberts, 197.

[161]This date is supplied without reference in J.J. Williams, 4.

construction began is not known," but the *Manufacturers' Record* of October 20, 1929 clarifies the record.[162] It states:

> GA. Atlanta. – Asa G. Candler Jr., will erect 3-story residence on Springdale Rd. (sic); brick; hardwood and tile floors; tile terraces, fountain, solarium, etc.; interior tile; 10 bath rooms; C. E. Frazier, Archt; H. J. Carr & Co., Contrs.; Southern Mosaic Tile Co., Candler Bldg., contr. For tile work at about $30,000; tile manufactured by Grueby Faience & Tile Col, Perth Amboy, N. J.[163]

The *Manufacturer's Record* is a bit cryptic but is revealing in its mention of $30,000 worth of tile work. That's no shabby amount of tile

According to Atlanta architectural historian Wright Marshall, in 1917 the Candler family hired Henry Hornbostel, a national acclaimed architect living in Pittsburgh, to design the initial buildings of Emory's new Atlanta campus.[164] In that same year, Asa Jr.'s brother, Charles, hired Hornbostel to build his Callanwolde estate just south of Briarcliff on Briarcliff Road. Seizing on the opportunity to continue working in the area, Hornbostel commissioned one of his associates, Owen Southwell, in 1919 to represent Hornbostel in Atlanta. The following year, Hornbostel hired Dan Bodin to provide further help. It was these two men, Southwell and Bodin, who oversaw the completion of Callanwolde. Both men graduated from Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, from the very architecture department that Hornbostel founded in 1905. With Southwell and Bodin on the ground in Druid Hills, Hornbostel turned his attention to other projects. Marshall suggests that while details are scant, Southwell and Bodin must have been in

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[162]National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, Page 4.
[163]October 20, 1921, "Manufacturers' Record," in National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, Page 4.
[164]Wright Marshall is the founder of Revival Construction, a remodeling a building company in Atlanta. For years, a hobby of his has been the architectural heritage of Atlanta, which he publishes on his blog, "The Georgian Revival: Dedicated to the Research and Preservation of Georgia Architects and Architectural History." His entry "An Unwritten Chapter of Briarcliff Road" offers helpful insights into the architectural heritage of Briarcliff. See also Wright Marshall, "Frazier and Bodin" http://www.atlantahomesmag.com/article/frazier-and-bodin.

Atlanta to finish the drawings for Callanwolde and oversee its completion. Meanwhile, Emory was also under construction.

In 1921, with his projects complete, Bodin remained in Atlanta and began working for local architect, Charles Frazier, who had maintained a small office in Atlanta since 1907 or 1908. It was Frazier that Asa Jr. hired to build his mansion, which was designed in the Georgian Revival style and completed in 1922. Frazier offered Bodin partnership in 1925 or 1926, and he quickly became the chief designer. Until 1935, Asa Jr. continued to work with Frazier and Bodin. In 1925, Bodin was asked by Candler to oversee several additions, including the music room and the porte cochere extension.

Marshall believes that the redesign of the music room (called DeOvies Hall) "provides the best insight into Bodin's participation at Callanwolde and his design acumen."[165] Further, Marshall adds, "The music room is Bodin's most elaborate Tudor interior…with its vaulted ceiling, limestone fireplace, and paneled walls [that recall] the winter living rooms at Callanwolde."[166] Elsewhere the music room is described as "one of the few 'great rooms' in the ancient English Manor house style rooms found in Atlanta."[167] Bodin continued to work for Asa Jr. for another decade, so it was presumably to him that Asa Jr. reportedly wrote, saying, "Bought circus; build zoo."

Briarcliff has been described as "a work of a master," but the reference is not to Bodin; it is to his partner Frazier.[168] At least one source reconciles the inconsistency. In a document included in the state archives of Briarcliff the authors observes that "Bodin

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[165]Marshall, "An Unwritten Chapter of Briarcliff Road."
[166]Ibid.
[167]National Historic Register, 8.3
[168]Ibid. It adds, "It is also the work of a master, Charles E. Frazier, who designed many of the houses in the West Paces Ferry Road area of Atlanta, an area that remains the most fashionable place to live in the city. This is one of the few houses he is known to have designed in another part of the city during the 1920s." Frazier was also known for his work in Ansley Park and Tuxedo Park

did the design work while Frazier was the practical builder."[169] Further, Marshall adds, "Generally, as architects got older they moved more to the business development side and let the younger architects do most of the work."[170]

House Description

It is fitting that the mansion has been referred to as a baronial manner. With 22 rooms, 30,000 square-feet, two wings, and three floors filled with luxurious domestic accouterments, it was an impressive residence. The front porch/main entrance stands two stories tall, supported by four free-standing Corinthian wooden columns. Just inside the front door, one finds a fifteen-foot tall entry hall with a large crown molding encircling the room. Directly in front of the entryway is the grand double staircase. Continuing on the first floor, turning left into the first room off the entry hall, was a drawing room/library covered floor to ceiling with wood paneling with four-inch deep coffers, plasters of Corinthian capitals, and a large marble fireplace. The hallway just outside the western doorway to the library/drawing room leads from the entryway to the porte cochere, and thus the summer porch, which was used, in part, as a lounge for waiting chauffeurs.[171]

[169]See "A Visit with Willard Lamberson," 2.
[170]Wright Marshall, email message to author, December 9, 2012.
[171]J.J. Williams, 4.

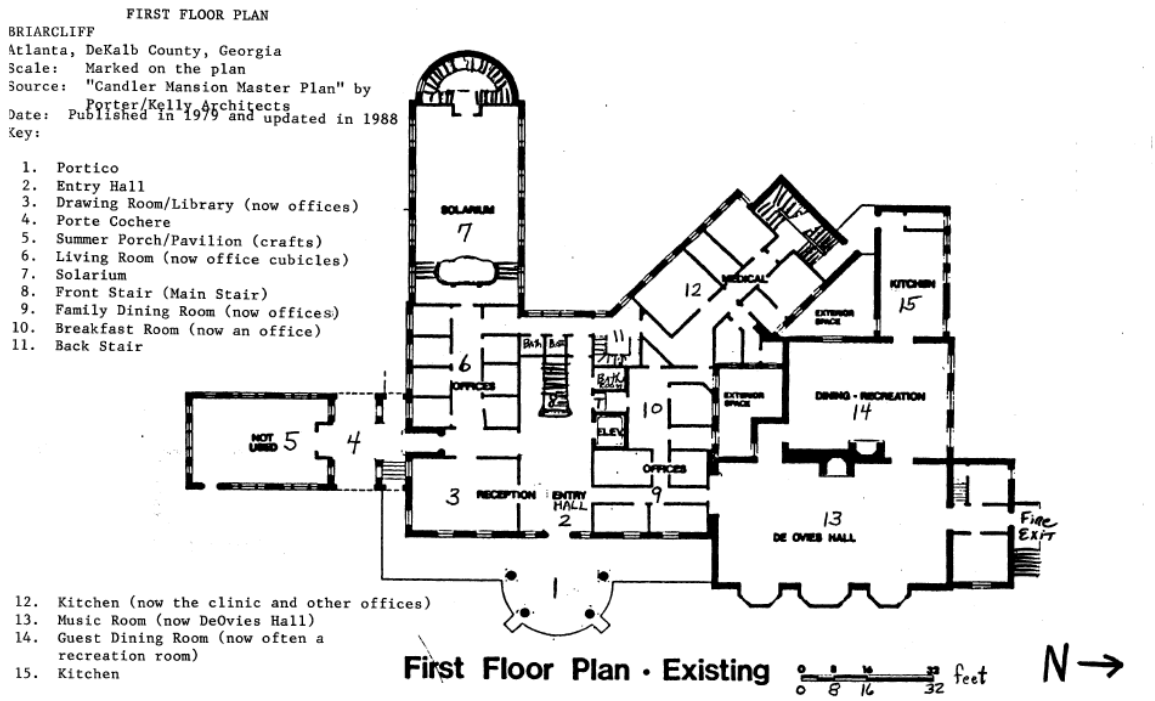

Figure 6. First-floor plan of Briarcliff, which includes previous and projected use.[172]

On the other side of that hallway, if one were to be walking thru the library and continuing east, was the original family living room with a fireplace on the north wall of the room. Continuing thru the living room, one finds the original solarium with tile floor, large windows on the northern and southern sides of the room, and large oil murals atop the final quarter of the eastern and western walls of the room, presumably painted by a friend of the Candlers. The room's ambience was complete with an organ and pond filled with gold fish.[173] Another fishpond was visible in the courtyard just north (and outside) of the solarium.[174]

Returning to the entry way and turning right this time from the front door, one finds the original formal (or 'state') dining room, replete with fifteen-foot ceiling, crown molding, and ceiling medallion, all replete throughout the first floor. Originally, the

[172]National Register of Historic Places, 18.
[173]J.J. Williams, 4.
[174]Ibid.

formal dining room, which could seat as many as seventy-five, also had an elaborate fireplace and mantel on the northern wall, but it was removed with the addition of the music room. The room west of the formal dining room was the original breakfast room, and continuing west, one found the original kitchen. To the north of the dining room was the music room.

As noted, the music room was not original to the home, but was added by Frazier and Bodin sometime between 1922 and 1925. At the peak of the ceiling, the room stood three stories tall with carved oak paneling two-thirds of the way up the wall and then cut stone (brick work) toward the ceiling, an impressively large fireplace—nine feet tall with an opening six feet wide by five feet tall—on the western wall that sits recessed off a floor to ceiling stone chimney, three large electric candle-light chandeliers, exposed wooden trusses, a balcony off the southern wall, and an eighty-seven stop cathedral-sized Aeolian pipe-organ on the northern wall of the room covered by a carved oak-paneled wall—all made this perhaps the most impressive of all the rooms.[175] The music room was a whopping 1,700 square feet large. To the west of this room was a family dining room (also called a 'guest' dining room). The fireplace in this room shares the same chimney as the one in the music room, but this one was imported from Europe and is made of hand-carved white marble. Off the northwest corner of this room was a small kitchen, presumable built to service this room alone. This kitchen and the family dining room were added alongside the music room and completed by April, 1925. (During the construction of these additions, the family went on a threemonths voyage around the

[175]See Craig Whitney, *All the Stops: The Glorious Pipe Organ and Its American Masters* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 133. It is believed that the organ cost almost $100,000 and was the largest privately-owned organ in the state of Georgia. See "Celebrating Aeolian Opus 1542", *Wesleyan* magazine, Fall/Winter 2008.

Pacific, visiting "the Orient, Australia and the South Seas.")[176] The National Register application notes, "The Music Room was the scene of many organ recitals and other musical events."[177] Further, "When the house was sold, the original organ (an Aeolian, installed in June, 1925) was donated to Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, and installed in 1958."[178]

[176]"Enjoys Three Months Cruise" *The Atlanta Journal*, January 2, 1931, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4, Box 2 (Candler Family).
[177]National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, Page 5.
[178]Ibid. Historical sketches seem to confuse the family, guest, state, and formal dining rooms. There were only two dining rooms, one just off the northern side of the front entryway and one west of the music room. Several sources claim that the state/formal dining room could entertain as many as 75 guests. But some sources place the state/formal dining room in the room west of the music room which is not large enough to accommodate seventy-five seats. Additionally, it seems less likely that the formal dining room would be an afterthought, which that room was when it was added with the addition of the music room. It seems more likely that the room just off the right of the entryway was the original formal dining room, especially since the kitchen was connected to it and it boasted an impressive fireplace and mantel. Then again, I could be wrong. At any rate, I have done my best to reconcile the differences between the two rooms (and their names) and have implemented that interpretation here. A Jun 13, 1926 *The Atlanta Journal* article seems to contradict my understanding, stating "Behind the music room there is a dining room whose Renaissance table will seat seventy five people."

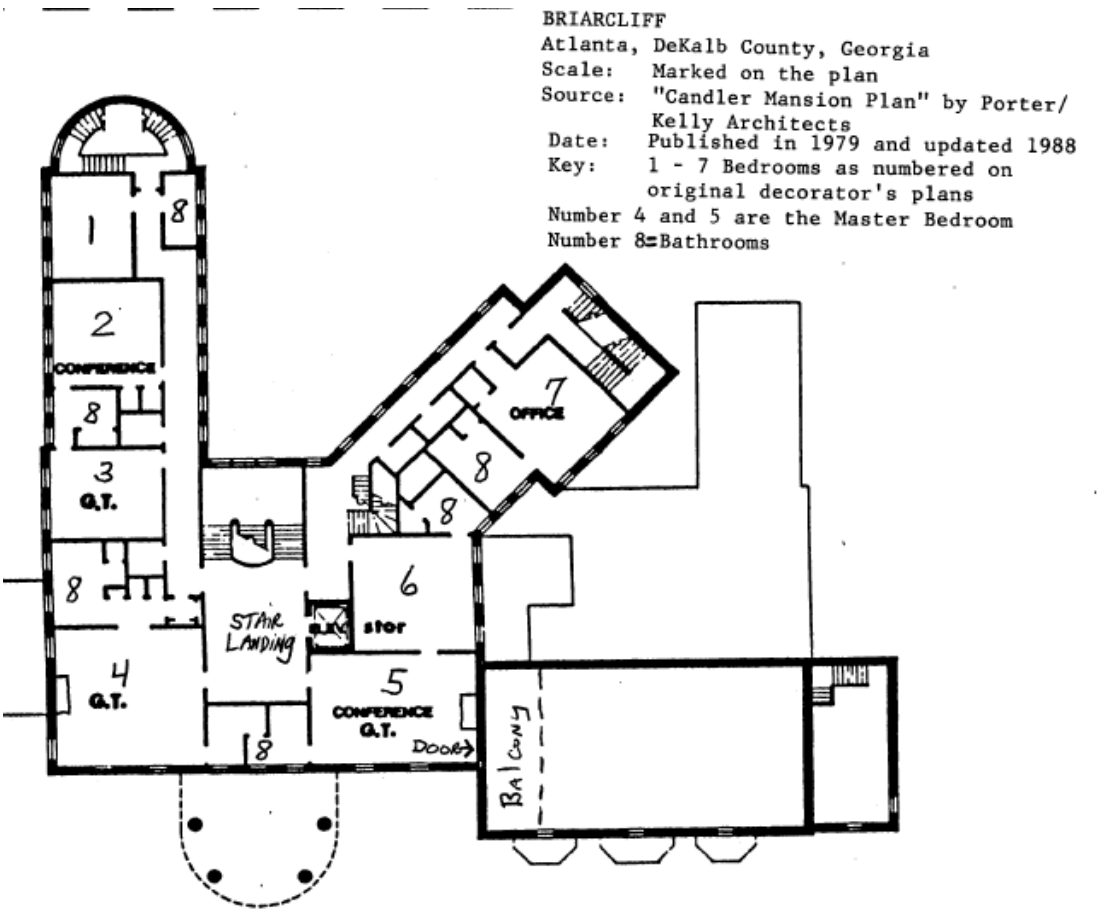

Figure 7. Second-floor plan of the mansion, noting previous and projected use.[179]

The upper floors of the home contained the private residence, although the ballroom was on the third floor. The second floor originally had seven bedrooms—one for each of the Candler children, one for mom and dad, and one for guests—and six bathrooms. The master bedroom actually consisted of two rooms, a large bathroom, and a hidden door, which led out onto the narrow balcony overseeing the music room. "During World War II," notes the National Register application, "the balcony of the Music Room was used to store radio transmitting equipment in the event that the United States was attacked."[180] Fortunately it was never used.

[179]National Register of Historic Places, 19.
[180]Ibid., Section 8, Page 5.

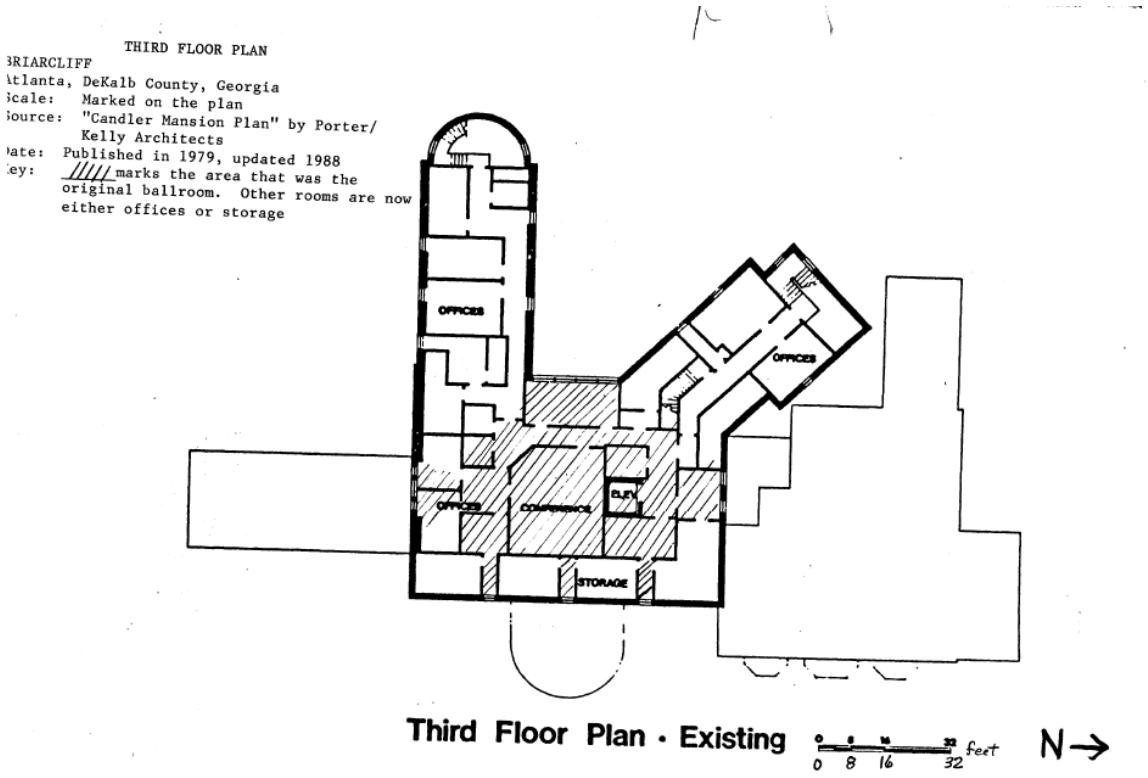

Figure 8. Third-floor plan of the mansion, noting previous and projected use.[181]

On the top floor (floor 3) there was the fifty-foot by seventy-foot ballroom with a vaulted ceiling, large crown molding, and walls finished in gold leaf. The remaining rooms on this floor, which had the same square footage as the seven-bedroom second floor, were presumably occupied by guest rooms, storage space, and perhaps servants' quarters.

The basement contained many typical fixtures—storage, maintenance room, mechanical equipment—with the exception of the large walk-in vault with the name Asa Candler Jr. painted on the large black steel door.[182]

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[181]National Register of Historic Places, 20.

[182]Details for the original floor plan and use of the home are taken from several sources. See Yolande Gwin, 16-G: But when Mr. Candler and his first wife, the late Helen Magill of Hartwell, completed the home they had a tremendous entrance hall and a twin stairway, a library, a music room, a state dining room, a family dining room, breakfast room, pantry kitchen, solarium. The five children had bedrooms, there was the master bedroom plus two great rooms on the second floor, plus adjoining baths. The ballroom was on the third floor." See also Briarcliff, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, National Park Service, United State Department of the Interior (NPS Form 10-800), dated 6/21/88, received by National

Manicured Grounds, Greenhouses

The magnificence of the Briarcliff estate extended beyond the walls of the mansion. In fact, what lay outside those walls was as headline-worthy as that within. Among the most alluring attractions of the Briarcliff estate was the extensive (and modern; i.e., electric lighting) glass and steel greenhouses, that cost the Candlers $55,000 to construct. (An additional $50,000 of additions to the greenhouses are mentioned in the June 1, 1924, *The Atlanta Journal* Sunday magazine.)[183] There were four (really two sets of two) that lay end to end just west of the house, in the vicinity of the terraced gardens, just south of the servants' quarters and garages. These greenhouses (or 'hothouses') kept some 2,000 orchids, a prized collection for Asa Jr. They were grown year round and maintained by a fulltime gardener, who also maintained the prized collection of carnations. Additionally, "more than eight hundred species of roses dotted the forty-two acres of land, over which bridges and walkways connected themed gardens, lighted so visitors could roam around the estate at night," writes Abrams.[184] The 'exquisite' orchids were Asa Jr.'s prize collection, and Helen's roses were regarded as "some of the countries finest."[185] In all likelihood, guests would follow the pergolas off the southeastern side of the house, down past the summer porch to the lush formal gardens, which lay to the south of the main house and the greenhouses in a sunken, terraced expanse.

Register on July 7, 1988; entered in the National Register 8/4/88. See also National Register of Historic Places.

[183]For relevant descriptions of the hothouses, see Thomas Memo, dated March 11, 1988 in the Historical Registry file.

[184]Abrams, 218.

[185]See "Mrs. Candler *Flies* to Tea," 3.

The Zoo and the Pool

The formation of what was called the grandest private zoo in the South was surely Asa Jr.'s most eccentric achievement. Asa was raised with animals (as was his father) and was a life-long animal lover (even as he spent a third of his life hunting big game). Several decades before there was a place called "Briarcliff Manor," the Candlers had their chicken farm and then their dairy farm. As Asa Jr. and his family settled into the Briarcliff property in the teens and twenties, they slowly accumulated their own collection of pets that might best be called a proto-zoo, for though it didn't make headlines in the same way that the 1932 zoo would, it had, nonetheless, an impressive line-up which included a pair of black bears, two baboons, two cages of brown and black monkeys; a herd of deer; a buffalo; and fifty different birds.[186] At some point, the date is unclear, Asa Jr. raised hogs, and it is believed that "one made its way to Winston Churchill."[187]

[186]Jessie Folsom Stockbridge, "Asa Candler's Private Zoo," May 1, 1932, *The Atlanta Journal*, p. 5, 17. Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 2. Stockbridge explains, "The original collection of animals and birds was accumulated by Mr. Candler on his travels throughout the United States, some representing gifts and others purchases."

[187]Mike Edwards, "Fables of Candler Estate Cannot be Dimmed by Time," *The Atlanta Journal*, July 17, 1952, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.

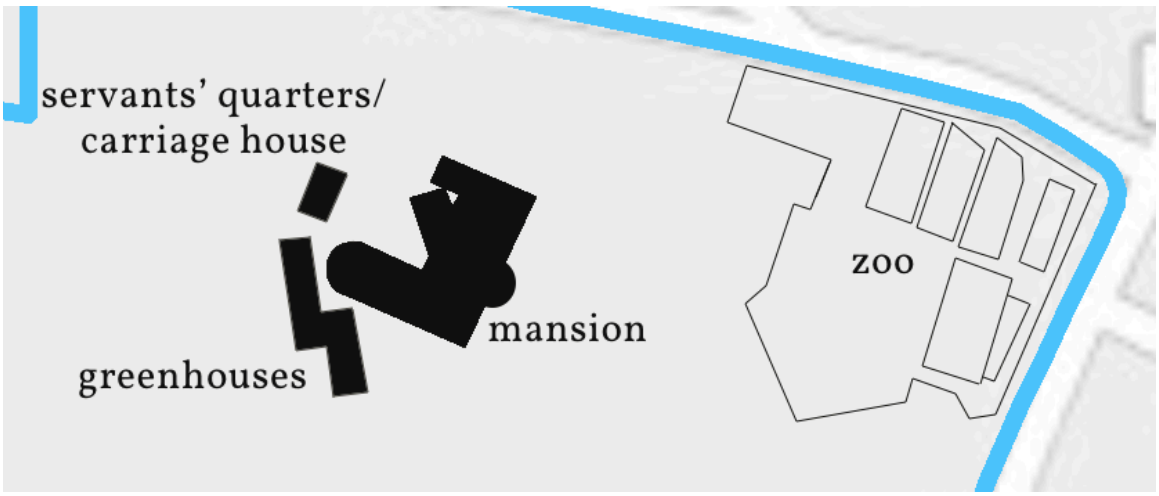

Figure 9. Map of the zoo, which lay on the northeastern most corner of the estate, at the corner of University and Briarcliff.[188]

There are conflicting stories about the origins of the zoo, but it seems most likely that while traveling with Florence thru Europe in 1931, Asa Jr. encountered a bankrupt circus, and with typical spontaneity, bought the circus and made plans to have it shipped to Briarcliff. An accompanying caveat is that Candler's purchase of the zoo may have been in direct relation to his escalating drinking problem; he may very well have been drunk when he bought the zoo. Regardless, Asa Jr. wrote his architect, Charles Frazier presumably, saying "Bought circus, build zoo." It would become the 'Briarcliff Zoo' (also called 'Zoological Garden' or 'Candler Zoological Garden').

Once back in the States, and with an itch to add to his circus collection, Asa Jr. contracted a wildlife importer to acquire "pairs of pumas, panthers, lions, bears [sic] leopards, chimpanzees, baboons, grivets, monkeys, buffalos, elephants, and a variety of birds from Africa, Asia, and South America."[189] His budget of $50,000 was more than enough to secure the best of all zoological collections —"fifty thousand dollars worth of

[188]ESRI, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.
[189]Abrams, 254.

aristocrats of the animal kingdom."[190] But bottomless pockets did not make the trek to Atlanta a convenient venture. Of the many newspaper articles in the *Atlanta Constitution* (and the *Journal*) about the zoo, perhaps the most illuminating is the one that describes the arrival of the beasts. And that is only in part due to the fact that this extravagant menagerie first started arriving at the height of the Great Depression, a time when countless *other* Americans were just happy to have food on the table.

The animals came from all over the world, and once they made it thru immigration, Asa Jr. hired special boxcars used by Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus to bring the animals to Atlanta, where the first shipments arrived at 7am on April 20, 1932. A crowd of "amazed persons" at the Emory University railway station welcomed the animals with plenty of oohs and ahs.[191] "Classes had to be canceled" so children could witness this once-in-a-lifetime event, and "everyone went down to the train station to watch the animals being unloaded."[192] It was a sight to behold.

The rail journey to Atlanta only got them to the train station. To get them to Briarcliff, trainers led a caravan of wild beasts on a two-mile walk thru Druid Hills to their new home. It was a memorable spectacle for the neighborhood and city, to say the least.[193] "'Mr. Candler now has the finest private collection of animals in the South,' said

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[190]Stockbridge, 5, 17.
[191]See "$50,000 Worth of Wild Animals Arrive For Private Menagerie of Asa Candler, Jr.," April 20, 1932, Emory University Special Collections, Collection 4, Box 2, Folder 2.
[192]Graham and Roberts, 215.
[193]See Jessie Folsom Stockbridge, 5, 17. Stockbridge explains the layout of the new (expanded) zoo: "Briarcliff zoo is a picturesque place. There are two entrances to the Candler estate, and the menagerie quarters occupy a large rectangle just inside the second pair of tall iron gates opening on Briarcliff Road…. The wall around the estate forms the back wall of the zoo. Close to this wall are the stalls which will house the long-legged animals—the camel, the llamas and the zebra. Here also is the pen for the rabbits. There is a small courtyard in front of these wire inclosures (sic), and around this yard are built the big steel cages for the bears, the pumas, the leopards, the lions, and the monkeys. At the northernmost end of the line of cages a big stucco house has been built for (17) the elephant and the new baboons. This house is floored in concrete, has several windows, a skylight and running water, and it will also be equipped with steam heat in

Miss Winifred Griffin, half owner of the Benson Wild Animal farm, who accompanied the furry creatures to Atlanta."[194] Upon their arrival at 'Briarcliff Manor', Asa Jr. proudly declared, "I want all children especially to see these animals, as I believe they will be of great educational value to them."[195] Certainly when he said 'all children' he was referring to the children of the neighborhood and city, but surely Asa Jr. took great delight in knowing what a treat the zoo would be for his children and grandchildren.

However, before a single child could behold the mighty collection—the zoo was to open amidst a grand circus celebration—neighbors campaigned vehemently to have the zoo moved to another part of the property, perhaps where the stench of wild beasts and the sounds of their calls and roars were not so offensive to the zoo's immediate neighbors. Elizabeth Candler Graham recalls that even Asa Jr.'s brother protested the zoo, stating, "Bud you've done some fool things in your life, but this is the damned foolest."[196] "Complaints that the zoo is a nuisance and that residents in Mr. Candler's neighborhood are fearful animals may escape," declared the *Atlanta Journal*, "were met with a statement Saturday by Fletcher Reynolds, curator of the zoo, that it is impossible for any of the wild animals to escape, and that sanitation in and around the cages is 100 per cent effective."[197] Ever-confident in the zoo's security, Reynolds added, "The Candler zoo has safety features more effective than those used in any other zoo in the

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the winter." The care taken to prepare this zoo echoes the care taken in the dairy farm venture, perhaps a fine preparation for such a domestic menagerie.

[194]Stockbridge, 5, 17. See also "Mr. Candler's Generosity," *The Atlanta Journal*, February 7, 1935, Emory University Special Collections, Collection 4, Box 2, Folder 2.

[195]Stockbridge, 5, 17.

[196]Graham and Roberts, 215.

[197]"Candler Will Open Circus For Benefit of Hospital Despite Threatened Suit," *The Atlanta Journal*, August 7, 1932, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 2. The article adds: At a meeting Friday night [Aug 5, 1932], more than a score of citizens in the neighborhood of Mr. Candler's estate met and formed an organization to complain against the present location of the zoo. They charged that the zoo is a nuisance, that offensive odors prevail and that they are kept awake by noise. They also stated they are in constant fear of animals escaping and running amuck."

country. We have constructed the buildings in such a manner that escape is impossible."[198] Neighbors were not satisfied, and as they would soon find out, their concerns were very much warranted.

After weeks of training and preparation, the Briarcliff zoo was finally opened to the public the following summer, 1932. It was open a few days a week and on special occasions. The zoo was an extremely expensive endeavor. It housed 300 exotic birds and 100 animals, including six alligators, seven sea lions, nine ponies, two elks, four deer, four bison, two oxen, two ostriches, two zebras, a camel, a puma, sixty-three monkeys, a brown bear, four Himalayan bears, two polar bears, two lynxes, four leopards, four lions, a Bengal tiger, and six elephants whose names included Delicious, Refreshing, Rosa, Coca, and Cola. Feeding as many as 400 dependent creatures was a massive expense.

Public Pool

To supply water for the animals, Asa Jr. had another (artesian) well dug just 50 yards away from the front steps of the mansion. It supplied such a great amount of water—5,000 gallons per minute—that it was enough to fill a large (100' x 130') new swimming pool, that held 550,000 gallons. (This was in addition to the private pool that lay just west of the greenhouses and was filled with concrete and converted to a parking lot sometime in the 1960s.) And what better way to offset the cost of the animals than to add a public pool, the "Briarcliff Pool", at twenty-five cents per visit (for whites), to complement the zoo's attraction?[199] (The pool also included bathhouses, lockers, a

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[198]"Candler Will Open Circus For Benefit of Hospital Despite Threatened Suit."

[199]See "View of Asa G. Candler's New Swimming Pool," June 4, 1933, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 2. In season, the pool was open Monday thru Saturday 10am to 10pm and 2pm-10pm on Sundays. The grounds of the estate were free ever night.

concession stand, ample deck space, a water slide or two, and a centerpiece fountain, lit neon at night.[200]) In a time before air-conditioning, in a part of the country with particularly blazing summers, the Briarcliff Pool was "a mecca for young and old."[201]

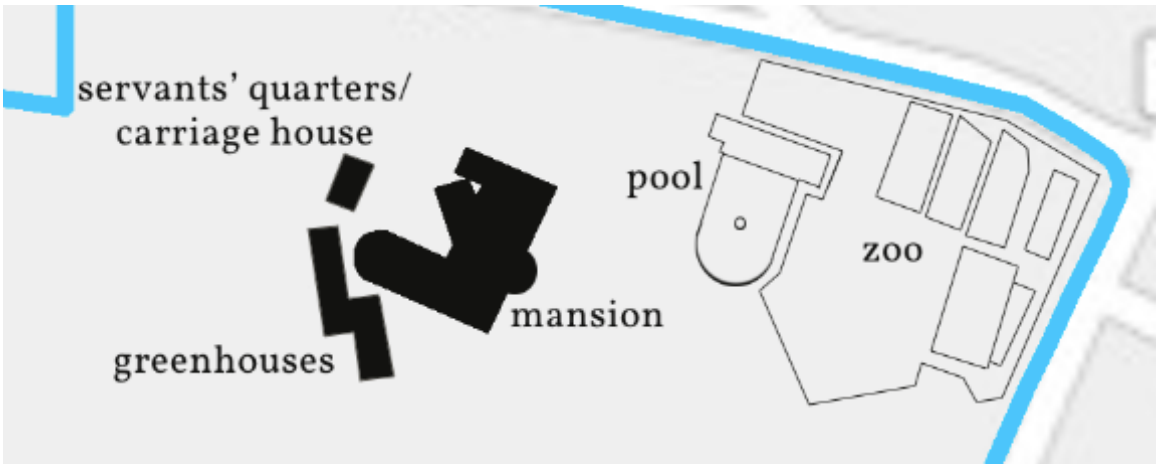

Figure 10. Map of the public pool, which was built with a large fountain in the center and a bathhouse to the rear, adjacent to the zoo and just steps off the front porch of the mansion.[202]

The Burgeoning Neighborhood

The majority of the pool's paying patrons came from the affluent neighbors immediately surrounding Briarcliff, whose homes were built between 1940 and 1960.[203] To the north of Briarcliff (on the southern side of University Drive), houses were built primarily in 1948 with one built as early as 1939 and another as late as 1953. To the south (on the northern side of Normandy Drive), houses were built in the late 1940s through the mid 1950s with the condominium complex at the corner of Normandy and Briarcliff being built in 1949. A handful of two-story houses on the opposite side of Briarcliff Road were built in the mid-1920s, but the rest of the houses on the eastern side

[200]J.J. Williams, "Briarcliff," in *The Druid Hills News*, Vol. 21.3, p. 4.
[201]Graham and Roberts, 216.
[202]ESRI, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.
[203]Information for build dates of the surrounding area was acquired through Trulia who contracts with a "data provider [who] compiles public record information from local assessor, tax collector, and recorder offices." See Trulia, "Where does Trulia get information about homes that are sold or no longer on the market?" accessed 24 August 2015, available at https://support.trulia.com/hc/en-us/articles/206730367-Where-does-Trulia-get-information-about-homes-that-are-sold-or-no-longer-on-the-market-.

of Briarcliff Road—primarily one-story ranches—were built in or around 1953. The western neighbors share a less adjacent boundary and these properties range from 1940 to 1960.

Of the neighbors to the west, there was none more unique or controversial than the Ku Klux Klan, who announced in 1921 that they had acquired property—from Baptist-related Lanier University, built four years prior—to build-out a university dedicated to Americanism. Lanier University was built to be an "All-Southern" college and a direct competitor to the burgeoning Emory University just one mile away.[204] "All-Southern" was code for a KKK affiliation, a relationship that was secured by naming William J. Simmons, the Imperial Wizard of the KKK, the Special Lecturer in Southern History.[205] Even so, historian Thomas G. Dyer notes, "the local press, Atlanta's elite, and the Baptist establishment seemed unperturbed by this possibility and regarded the new school with enthusiasm."[206] Some of that enthusiasm surely was in response to plans to construct a campus that essentially represented an ode to the South. On a crescent stretch of fifty-six acres of land just northwest of Briarcliff, plans were drawn to build-out the university campus with several replicas of famous southern buildings: Arlington Hall, Mt. Vernon, and Monticello, among others.

Actually, the college only owned three acres of the planned campus as boosters were unable to secure funding (and the land) to meet the prescribed plans. In 1920, there was a recession, which also meant enrollment was down – a double whammy for the college. A year later, creditors came calling and the college was forced to acquired

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[204]*Cox College Bulleting* (1916), pp. 7-9; Graham, *Baptist Biography*, p. 157. Interview with Lewis H. Fowler, Atlanta, 4 Nov. 1975, in "The Klan on Campus: C. Lewis Folwer and Lanier University," by Thomas G. Dyer in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 77 (Autumn 1978), 456.
[205]Dyer, 459.
[206]Ibid.

outside funding. Enter the KKK, who agreed to assume all debt under the conditions that the leadership and administration of the university be replaced with Klan sympathizers and members. Lanier University was to become a Klan school and all students, while they needn't be Klan members themselves, must be deemed "real Americans." There were only two required courses, one on the Constitution, the other on the Bible. Other than that, the university was to remain unchanged, which likely reflected its always-extant sympathies with the Klan.

Still, the college was in massive debt. "By the early summer of 1922," Dyer writes, "Imperial Headquarters had poured at least $77,000 into the college's operation; yet even this amount did not begin to cover the tremendous debts [the university] had incurred."[207] The school had placed too large of a burden on the Klan's financial books and in August 1922 bankruptcy proceedings had been commenced in federal court. The proposed campus ceased development. In fact, only one building was ever erected, Arlington Hall.

Over the next two decades that building served various residential purposes but largely fell into near-disrepair. Eying the property as a future home for their Morningside members, Congregation Shearith Israel (located on Washington St. in Summerhill) acquired the building and adjacent property with plans to use them for religious services.[208] Much renovation was needed over the next several years.[209] The congregation met in the met in the original replica of the Curtis-Lee mansion (from

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[207]Dyer, 468.
[208]Shearith Israel were looking for an alternative to their Summerhill property which was set to be majorly disrupted by the building of the Downtown Connector.
[209]Craig Strain, "Shearith Israel Renovates 'All Southern" Lanier University,' *Virginia-Highland Voice*, January 1981, accessed October 11, 2015. http://vahi.org/shearith-israel-renovates-all-southern-lanier-university-1981/.

Arlington National Cemetery) until 1957, at which point the congregation had outgrown it and built a larger one just east.

The Zoo's Brief Run

The neighborhood surrounding Briarcliff was developed between the 1930s and 1950s. These neighbors had access to the Candlers' public pool and for a few years they had access to a zoo as well! The zoo was nestled in the northeastern corner of the estate, just inside the second iron gate (when travelling north on Briarcliff). The zoo lay between that gate and the intersection of what is today University and Briarcliff. A seven-feet high stone wall—extant today—was erected along the northern and eastern boundaries of the property to help prevent escapes.

The very neighbors that feared such escapes would be proved right when almost immediately law suits began to be filed, claiming everything from property damage, to loss of property value, to offensive sounds and smells—just imagine the sounds of trumpeting elephants and roaring lions. Neighbors were not too pleased with the zoo, and their voices accumulated, making such a ruckus that their presence overshadowed whatever civic value the zoo may have had. After several escapes—some resulting in civil suits that were in the tens of thousands of dollars—and plenty of nuisance complaints, the zoo was dismantled in 1935.[210] In reality, though, "it was proving to be the costliest craziness of [Asa Jr.'s] unorthodox career," suggests Abrams, "mounting up tabs that even Asa Candler Jr. had trouble paying."[211] The costs of the zoo included

[210]Neighbors claimed loss of property value and the nuisance of escaped animals. "All year long, neighbors phoned about sightings of birds and beasts trampling down their gardens, destroying their roses, and frightening their children," writes Abrams. (257)
[211]Abrams, 258.

upkeep (food, water, medicine, staffing, insurance) and civil litigation—all told, a massive sum. At the zoos closing, the animals were redistributed and many were given to Atlanta's Grant Park Zoo, a move that certainly came with great disappointment for Asa Jr.[212] Abrams observes:

> Asa, himself, experienced enormous pleasure opening his spacious grounds to admirers, witnessing the amusement of children, and inviting the press to gloat over his acquisitions. Most of all, the project revealed that deep down, he was still Buddie. Middle-aged and paunchy he might be, yet the warm, creative, impractical, and irrepressible boy in him exulted in living out his childhood fantasy of running off to join a circus. If realizing the dream threatened to diminish his wealth, the pleasure of his ride must have made it seem worthwhile.[213]

In the end, the public zoo would prove to be among Asa Jr.'s most costly ventures, for even with his great wealth, Abrams suggests that the three-year zoo was such a financial burden that he never quite recovered from it.

Commercial Laundry

The public pool was replenished by the new well dug. With the animals gone, there was more than enough water, thought Asa Jr., to supply a laundry business. (As it turned out, there was enough water for a zoo, two pools, a commercial laundry, a bottling company, and an electric plant.)[214] Ever the entrepreneur, the man that built a public zoo

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[212]One account suggests that 177 animals were given to the Grant Park zoo and the rest were sold or distributed elsewhere. See "Mr. Candler's Generosity."

[213]Abrams, 259.

[214]And that was just the beginning of the wells' contributions. According to Mike Edwards, "They supplied water for the big Candler house and its servant buildings, and for a half dozen projects that seemed to have the Midas touch…swimming pools…laundry…electric generating plant…water to be bottled and sold to downtown office buildings for coolers…. A cafeteria was erected on the grounds for employees of the laundry and its storage plant, both of which were destroyed in a fired in the middle 1940s." See Edwards. Graham and Roberts also suggest that there was "enough left over laundry" to supply a "diaper service," though they give no other indication as to what this diaper service may have included, and there is no other record of such business. (217) Graham and Roberts add, "After he had the water tested for purity by the Coca-Cola Company, it proved of such outstanding quality, he decided to share it with others. Not one to

and pool in his front yard would build a public laundry—Briarcliff Laundry—in his back yard, behind the servants' quarters.[215] The laundry included winter storage facilities and dry-cleaning.[216] The National Register application notes that "laundry services were provided free to the military stationed in Atlanta," but most of the clients were affluent.[217]

Preoccupied with real estate ventures, Asa Jr. turned the laundry business over to his sons Sam and John, who, according to Abrams, ran a "far-too-casual operation," lacking the discipline and experience of their father.[218] The laundry lost money and never more than when it burnt to the ground in 1943.

A police investigation the following year proved that the Candlers had been pocketing money that was supposed to go toward an insurance policy that would ostensibly cover damages caused if, say, a fire were to occur. Investigators claimed that Candler charged $.01 insurance fee to each bill for a total of $40,000 over eight years, but Candler never purchased the insurance; he pocketed the money. With no insurance policy in place, many wealthy Atlantans were outraged by the loss of their possessions to the 1943 fire. Not only had they lost their fur coats, there was also no insurance to cover their loss. Asa Jr. and his sons were indicted by a federal grand jury on two counts of what amounted to fraud. The sons admitted to mishandling the business yet denied intentionally defrauding their customers. In the end, there was insufficient evidence to

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waste good business opportunities, Buddie quickly went into business of bottled water sales from the 'Crystal Pure Wells at Briarcliff.'" (217)

[215]Graham and Roberts note that there were several pick-up and drop-off offices around town, but it's not clear to me whether customers ever came to the Briarcliff Laundry. From what I gather, it seems that the customer-facing side of the laundry was at these various offices, rather than the Briarcliff Estate. See Graham and Roberts, 232.

[216]Graham and Roberts note that Asa Jr. built a cafeteria near the laundry for laundry workers, but the cafeteria is not found elsewhere in the public record.

[217]National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, Page 6.

[218]Abrams, 284.

charge the Candler's with a crime, but they were required to reimburse their clients. It was all over the newspapers, and not in a good way.

Leaving Briarcliff

By the late 1940s, all of Asa Jr.'s children were grown and in homes of their own. Perhaps with too much space to maintain, perhaps due to rising costs—it really isn't clear—Asa Jr. and Florence left Briarcliff in 1949. Abrams suggests that it was "recent financial setbacks and lifelong extravagances" that forced Asa Jr. to sell, but it seems so difficult to imagine any decision could threaten his great wealth.[219] At any rate, the time to leave had come and after several dead-end negotiations with potential buyers, Asa Jr. finally sold the 42-acre estate to the federal government in 1949, moving out the following year.

Their move wasn't far, just over a mile from Briarcliff—south on Briarcliff Road and west on Ponce de Leon Avenue. There at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Ponce de Leon Avenue lay the Briarcliff Hotel. It was built in 1924/5 by Asa Jr.'s real estate company.[220] Originally called "750" then "1050," the Briarcliff Hotel was an H-shaped, 9-story, 200-unit luxury apartment building, with a restaurant and shops on the bottom floor, as was customary. After the '29 crash, it was converted into 400 smaller unites and became a hotel, a more profitable business at the time. Actually, it seems to have functioned as a hotel/apartment complex for the 30s and 40s. "At the time," writes Abrams, "it was considered one of the most fashionable and modern residential addresses

[219]Abrams, 287

[220]Asa Jr.'s real estate investment company is reported to have had as many as thirty-three apartment buildings and "a number of hotels" at its height. See "Asa Candler, Jr. Dies at 72; Rites Held Tuesday," *The DeKalb New Era*, January 15, 1953, p. 3, "Asa Candler's Family file," DeKalb Historical Society.

in the city."[221] So when Asa Jr. and Florence moved into the nine-room penthouse in 1949, though they certainly took a step back in size, they were still living in the lap of luxury. (Some sources suggest that the Candlers split residences between the Hotel and Briarcliff until 1952.)

Left behind was their beloved Briarcliff. The federal government (US General Services Administration) originally purchased the property for $250,000 in order to build a $9,000,000, 400-bed Veterans Affairs hospital.[222] Emory University would have had "charge of the medical program" at the hospital.[223] Asa Candler, Jr. saw the plan as an ideal move forward for his estate. "I think it will be good for Emory Medical School," Candler explained, "and it will be good for the veterans," adding "I want to help both."[224] Asa Jr., always the shrewd capitalist, must have also taken into account—perhaps primarily—the tax incentives that would come with the sale. But it is also true that benefitting Emory and veterans was important to Asa Jr.

The veterans' hospital never materialized. "When the government cut its hospital-building program, Atlanta was ruled out and the property became surplus."[225] (The final blow to the plan was the fact that "the Army turned over Oliver General

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[221]Abrams, 240-41.

[222]The land alone was estimated to be worth $500,000 (and the house and pool were thought to be worth as much as $1.1 million.) However, when the government could not afford the $500,000 asking price, Asa Jr. cut them a deal: "I will sell only to the government and to the government I will cut the price in half." See "This Merits a Pat on the Back," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 26, 1949, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.

[223]"6 New Buildings Are Under Way," March 1950, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4. It's curious to note that Emory University would have been a key player in developing the hospital for the Veterans Administration, as the dean of the medical college was the one who appointed the search and planning committee, and it was noted that "the hospital will be supervised by the Emory University School of Medicine…." See "VA To Buy Candler Estate For $250,000 to Construct Huge $9,000,000 Hospital," June 24, 1949, Emory University Special Collections, Collection 4, Box 4, Folder 3.

[224]"This Merits a Pat on the Back."

[225]"Candler Estate Likely Site for Alcoholic Home," *Atlanta Journal*, December 19, 1951, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4, Box 2, Folder 3.

Hospital at Augusta to the VA" in 1950, meaning a new facility in the area was also not immediately necessary."[226]) Thus, the property was designated surplus property within the federal government's assets.

The state of Georgia, seizing upon the opportunity to acquire prime real estate, acquired the property—lease with an option to buy—from the federal surplus in 1952. The state's plan was to convert the mansion into an addiction recovery hospital, to be called the Georgian Clinic. Renovations cost about $100,000, money that was largely spent on creating office space by sectioning-off many of the larger rooms in the mansion. The following year, 1953, marked both the death of Asa Griggs Candler, Jr. and the birth of the Georgian Clinic, what would be the next instantiation of the Briarcliff Campus.

Repurposing the Mansion

In the intervening years between the Candler's departure and the Georgian Clinic's arrival, the departure of the land's caretakers meant that virtually all parts of the estate were overgrown, being reclaimed, one might say, by nature. In his article, "Fables of Candler Estate Cannot Be Dimmed by Time," journalist Mike Edwards comments on his tour of the uninhabited estate. "Tall weeds now grow in the terraced gardens where roses once bloomed profusely," he observes.[227] "Ragweed and sumac dot the little golf course."[228] What was once an eccentric aristocratic estate, now had "an eerie, lonesome air when the wind whispers in the big oaks and poplars that dot the rambling hills and

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[226]"VA Says Candler Estate On Briarcliff Not Needed," *Atlanta Constitution*, August 24, 1951, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4, Box 2, Folder 3.
[227]Edwards.
[228]Ibid.

valleys."[229] Change had come to Briarcliff. Without its eccentric tenant, it was a place in transition with an energy that bespoke vacancy.

Truth be told, many of the surrounding neighbors would have preferred it to stay that way. With news that a slew of alcoholics—and other addicts!—would soon be mere feet from their back doors, the neighborhood once again protested. After all, who wants a bunch of drunks walking around in such an affluent neighborhood? Many residents petitioned the state for a public park—it was a "bitter fight"—and they even had the backing of Mayor Hartsfield.[230] When their voices were not heard, they threatened fighting the state all the way to the Supreme Court, and there was even a direct petition to the President.[231]

For a moment, the disgruntled neighbors saw an opening. When the property was turned to federal surplus, the government made it available for acquisition by another governmental or private entity. Of course, the state of Georgia was in the hunt to secure the property, but one of its competitors was the Southern Regional Education board, which was a fourteen-state cooperative that included several educational organizations, one being the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACSS), the governing board that accredits Emory University and many other schools.[232]

The disgruntled neighbors, however, were up against a much bigger campaign than perhaps they realized. In 1951, the Georgia General Assembly created the

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[229]Edwards.
[230]Michael Booth, "The Classic Style of the Coca-Cola Homes: Callan Castle and the Homes that Coke Built," in *Southern Homes* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 97. See also Edwards.
[231]""Residents Draw Rebuttal In Candler Estate Issue," *Atlanta Journal*, July 18, 1952; Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4. The author writes, ""O.L. Adams, president of the Druid Hills Civic Association, said funds were being raised to carry the residents' fight against the hospital all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary." For petition to president, see Ken Turner, "Regional Educators Ask Candler Property," *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, June 8, 1952, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.
[232]See Turner.

Commission on Alcoholism, whose purpose was, according to Governor Talmadge, "attempting to rehabilitate alcoholics who might become useful citizens."[233] The General Assembly had a new venture and had prime real estate nearby with immediate access to local hospitals; the Briarcliff estate was ideal for implementing the goals of the new commission. It is no surprise, then, that the Southern Regional Education board was overlooked for the much anticipation hospital for alcoholics.

Georgian Clinic

Briarcliff has, for the majority of its modern instantiation, been a mental health facility. The Georgian Clinic was the first in a line of several different moments in that sub-history, but it was not a smooth transition for the neighborhood. "A lot of water has gone under the bridge since Mrs. Candler complained mildly of elephants five years ago," wrote Celestine Sibley. "The house has been sold, Mr. Candler has died, and the elephants which he used to clear the land for his kitchen garden or merely allowed to cavort gracefully on the extensive ground, are no more."[234] The land that was once Creek Nation territory, then a premier poultry and dairy farm, then aristocratic estate including commercial laundry, zoo, public pool, and golf course, was now largely empty, with the exception of the repurposed mansion, which had new inhabitants.

The Georgian Clinic was operated by the State Alcoholism Commission and was the first of its kind—a residential hospital for alcoholics—in the South. It was opened in

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[233]"State Acquires Candler Tract For Alcoholics," *Atlanta Journal*, July 15, 1952, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.
[234]Celestine Sibley, "Gone is Picturesque Past as Candler Home Opens Its Doors to State's Problem Drinkers," *Journal Constitution*, April 4, 1954, Emory University Special Collections, MSS 4 (Candler Family), Box 2, Folder 4.

1953 under the direction of Dr. Vernelle Fox. At capacity, it housed thirty live-in patients and was managed by a staff of fifty.[235]

In the 1950s, a gatehouse was constructed (just inside the main gate to the campus) to house Commission offices, and an elevator was added just inside the main entrance of the mansion-now-hospital to bring the mansion up to spec. The mansion, a 10-acres parcel and grounds, was used as a hospital for all of Georgia at first, but eventually just serviced the Atlanta area. Within the mansion, much renovation was necessary to turn this private residence into office space and mixed-use. Acoustic drop-ceilings were installed, and several rooms were divided into cubicles, especially the family dining room, family living room, and the private residences. Further, in honor of the first professional staff member hired at the clinic (and its first chaplain), the Very Reverend Raimund DeOvies (dean of St. Philip's Episcopal Cathedral), the music room was renamed DeOvies Hall.

The DeKalb Addiction Center and the Georgia Mental Health Institute

In Georgia, the early 1960s were a time of reformation for the state mental health system. On the docket was the development of thirty-three community health centers and two institutions to facilitate research and training. The development of community-based mental health facilities was a response to the development of the first antipsychotic drugs in the mid-1950s and the era of deinstitutionalization that such treatments promulgated.[236]

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[235]More specifically, it opened in October, 1953 with the purpose of treating outpatient addicts. Five months later, in April of 1954, it began its residential program. See Sibley.

[236]"Deinstitutionalization is the name given to the policy of moving severely mentally ill people out of large state institutions and then closing part or all of those institutions; it has been a major contributing factor to the mental illness crisis." See E. Fuller Torrey, "Deinstitutionalization: A Psychiatric 'Titanic,'" excerpt from Ch. 1, 3, and Appendix of *Out of the Shadows: Confronting America's Mental Illness* Crisis (New

The Kaiser Foundation paper "Learning from History: Deinstitutionalization of People with Mental Illness as Precursor to Long-Term Care Reform" succinctly describes the change in mental health treatment in the US from 1950 to 2000:

> The history of deinstitutionalization is not linear; it falls into several stages as policies and objectives changed over time. The reduction in the number of people institutionalized began in 1956, when public hospitals housed 559,000 individuals. A substantial majority were on the back wards, usually for years—a parallel with nursing homes today. (Back wards of state hospitals were for those not expected to recover where custodial care, but no treatment, was provided. Over the next 25 years, the resident population dropped by nearly three-quarters, falling to 154,000 individuals in 1980. The 25 years after that saw the actual closing of institutions and significant changes in community services and supports.[237]

Noteworthy in this period is the shift from custodial care to therapeutic care; the focus on the civil rights of those formerly (often involuntarily) committed to state institutions; the therapeutic element fostered by the place, structure, and design of facilities; and the belief that many conditions could be treated in community facilities located near a person's home.

Until the mid-20th century mental health was traditionally a state rather than federal responsibility. However, the period following World War II called for the need for federal intervention in the nation's mental health needs. In 1946, President Truman signed the National Mental Health Act and three years later (1949) the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) was established by act of Congress under the auspices of the National Institute of Health (NIH). In 1955, the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health, which was appointed by Congress, published a report titled *Action for Mental Health*, which called for community-based mental health facilities. The Committee also

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York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), accessed October 29, 2015. www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/asylums/special/excerpt.html.

[237]Chris Koyanagi and David L. Bazelon, "Learning From History: Deinstitutionalization of People with Mental Illness As Precursor to Long-Term Care Reform" (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, August 2007), 8.

called for spending on mental health to double in five year and triple in ten years, and it called for better training and research. In 1963, President Kennedy "sent a special message to Congress calling to replace institutions with comprehensive community programs to provide outpatient care, day treatment, rehabilitation, foster-home services and public education on mental health."[238] Under this model "funding would flow to communities—to hospitals or nonprofit community agencies—and not to the states, which would remain responsible for long-term institutional services."[239] These were the steps that paved the way for mental health innovation in the middle of the century.

In 1959, an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* investigation—a series of articles by reporter Jack Nelson and others—of overcrowding and poor care at Central State Hospital, the first mental health facility in Georgia, founded in Milledgeville in 1842, led to public outrage and thus reform. Central State had been accused of being a 'human warehouse' with under-qualified, under-trained, and too few professionals. It was a place where the staff's perspective was 'custodial' in nature rather than therapeutic. By the late 1950s it was evident that the Georgia had too few facilities, too few trained mental health professionals, and inadequate care.[240]

The early 1960s in Georgia was a period of mental health reform. The new agenda for mental health in Georgia that emerged in the early 60s is described as "a three-legged milking stool" in which the first leg is "the development of all-purpose community health center programs, each to serve a population of 75,000 to 200,000,

[238]Koyanagi and Bazelon, 9.
[239]Ibid.
[240]See "The Story of the Georgia Mental Health Institute" (GMHI Archive, unpublished document), 7.

totaling 33 separate centers for the entire state."[241] The second leg "proposed the development of a modern state hospital system to provide intermediate and long-term care and treatment and also to provide the community-type hospital services described above until such communities can develop their own programs."[242] This leg would de-centralize Central State Hospital and a lot for a system of eight to ten regional hospitals throughout Georgia that would work in tandem with the community centers described above. The third leg of the agenda "provided for the development of two institutions which would carry primary responsibility for professional manpower development needed to support the community programs and the state hospital programs and a research program to include both basic and applied research which would lead to the prevention of mental disorders and to better treatment and rehabilitation of these disorders."[243] Initially there were two such institutions, the Georgia Retardation Center, which was dedicated solely to mental retardation, and the Georgia Mental Health Institute, which was dedicated to mental illness, alcoholism, and drug dependency.

In 1965, the Georgia Mental Health Institute (GMHI) was opened on the southern side of the property of the original Briarcliff estate. The ten buildings totaled 225,000 square feet, took thirty-two months to construct, and cost $12.5 million to construct. GMHI opened in September of 1965. It was a facility dedicated to the three-fold mission of training, research, and treatment. As outlined by the state's mental health agenda, GMHI was created to train mental health professionals. This was accomplished by

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[241]Addison M. Duval, "Georgia Mental Health Program: A Look Backward and Forward in 1970," GMHI archives, 1970, p. 3. Presumably in 1970, Dr. Duvall served as director of the Division of Mental Health within the Georgia Department of Public Health.
[242]Duval, 4.
[243]Ibid..

workshops, seminars, conferences, interdisciplinary courses, continuing education, and clinical experience for professional degree students. Second, GMHI focused on experimental and preventative research so as to better understand mental health and mental illness. Third, GMHI served as a treatment facility, broken-down by three groups: children, adults, and addicts. It served both inpatient and outpatient needs and had a capacity of 282 inpatient beds. In 1970 alone GMHI logged more than 75,000 inpatient or 'daypatient' visits.[244] At its peak, GMHI was a fascinating complex that intermingled students, patients, and researchers under 'one roof'.

In the first five years of the institute, GMHI trained 58 physicians in psychiatry, 18 master's level nurses, 44 master's level social workers, 36 clinical psychologists (PhDs), and 60 clinical chaplains.[245] Training programs also included occupational therapy, music therapy, recreation therapy, and vocational rehabilitation.[246] Major research programs included: neurophysiology, behavioral studies, group therapy, human genetics, child studies, experimental psychopathology, social research, family studies, sleep research, social work, and community mental health.[247] All research at GHMI was done in partnership with Emory University's Department of Psychiatry. In fact, the Briarcliff estate location was chosen because of the proximity of Emory and its resources. By 1972, twelve regional universities shared in the training and research function of GMHI.[248]

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[244]GMHI 1972 Memo (GMHI Archive, unpublished document), 7.
[245]Duval, 5.
[246]Ibid., 10.
[247]Ibid., 11.
[248]See GMHI memo dated March 1972 (GMHI Archive, unpublished), p. 1: "Twelve universities share in the training and research function of the Institute. Contracts with the Department of Psychiatry and the School of Nursing at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, have been made yearly since the opening of the Institute for Psychiatric residency and graduate nursing training. Research programs at the Institute are conducted under contract with the Department of Psychiatry, Emory University. The Psychology

GMHI contained two main buildings, Buildings A and B, and eight satellite buildings, which were used as wards or residential cottages, all connected to the main buildings via underground tunnels. The outlying buildings, Cottage 1-8, serviced different segments of the hospitals population, from children to adults. For example, Cottage 8 was the children's unit and was a double unit that contained a DeKalb County school, a psychiatric component, residential areas, an autism center, and two playgrounds outside. Cottage 8 had children; Cottage 7 had adolescents; Cottage 6 had adults; and Cottage 5 was also for adults. Cottages 1-4 were also for adults.

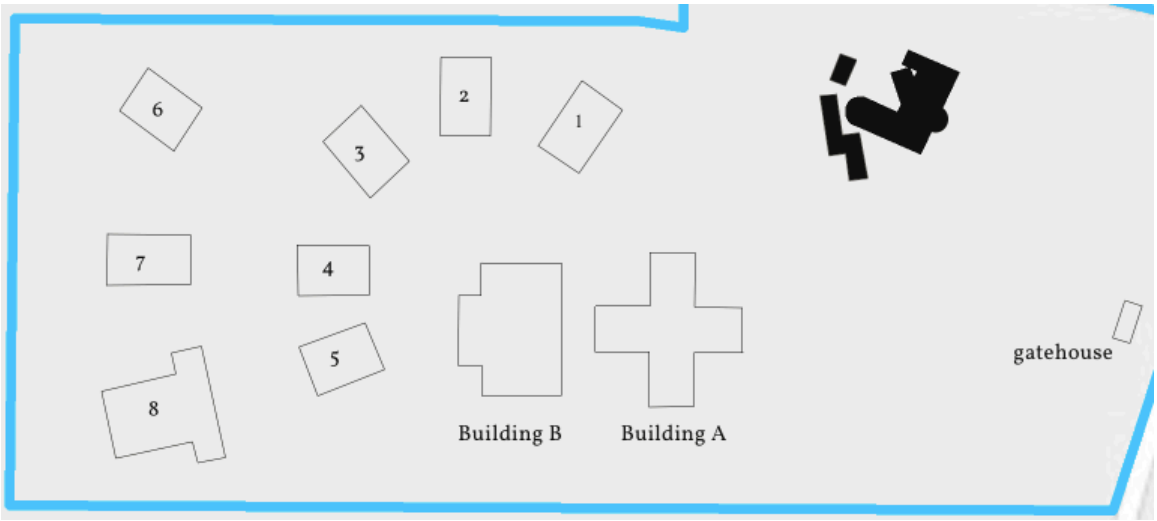

Figure 11. Map of GMHI. The numbered buildings on the GMHI campus have been called "units," "cottages," and "buildings." For example: Unit 8, Cottage 8, Building 8.[249]

The main building, Building A, boasted an "ultra-modern design" of concrete latticed windows that resemble Soviet or Apartheid-era construction.[250] The design of the complex was to "symbolize Georgia's forward looking attitude in the field of mental

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Department provides graduate and post graduate training for the University of Georgia, Georgia State University and the Universities of Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida. Field training in Social Work is conducted for Atlanta University and the University of Georgia. The Chaplaincy Department is affiliated with the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Interdenominational Theological Center. Music Therapy gives preference to students completing their training at the University of Georgia and other schools in neighboring states. Recreational Therapy is affiliated with the University of North Carolina and Vocational Rehabilitation with the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, and the University of Tennessee."

[249]ESRI, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.

[250]GMHI Research Training Brochure (GMHI Archive, unpublished document), 1.

health."[251] Building A was the main building of the hospital complex, but on account of GMHI being a community-based hospital that also had research facilities, it had some surprising components. The ground floor contained the cafeteria, laundry, housekeeping, supply shop, print shop, pharmacy, medical records, and a barber/beauty shop, among other small units. Floors 1-4 contained typical hospital scenes: admissions, crisis unit, medically fragile unit, detox unit, laboratories, and radiology. The first floor contained a 293-seat auditorium. The second floor contained sleep therapy, electroshock therapy, and x-ray departments. The third floor had a 6,000+ volume library and a 110-seat auditorium. The fourth and fifth floor contained family research, behavioral research, neurophysiology research, and psychopathology research, among others.[252]

But, insofar as this hospital was also a psychiatric research facility it contained research labs, lecture rooms and auditoriums, a methadone production lab, and monkeys. Yes, monkeys! As a former staff member described the building to me, upon remembering the fifth floor she said, "And the fifth floor was monkeys!"[253] It appears that the money lab on the fifth floor was for rhesus monkey research and had some affiliation with both the medical school and Yerkes National Primate Research Center. The research concerned reproduction and "the neural and hormonal factors that influence behavior."[254] Other research at GMHI included genetics and autism. In GMHI's final

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[251]GMHI Research Training Brochure (GMHI Archive, unpublished), 1.
[252]See GMHI 1972 memo (GMHI Archive, unpublished), p. 8.
[253]Mary Lou Rahn worked on and off at GMHI from June 1971 until the summer of 1998 when she literally handed the keys over to Emory University. From September 1972 until August 1973 she worked at Emory during her nursing masters, and in 1985 she returned to GHMI after a few stints at teaching in local colleges. Her roles at GMHI covered overseeing virtually every component of the Institute. Rahn's contributions to this research are a valuable resource as she personally has maintained a small archive—the only one extant today—that catalogues many of the years at GMHI. Rahn now works for the state of Georgia for CRIPA (Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act) as a settlement agreement implementation coordinator.
[254]See "The Story of the Georgia Mental Health Institute" (GMHI Archive, unpublished document), 12.

days, research was still front and center as there were "10 [Emory] faculty scientists conducting 18 research studies," all of which "focused on mental health ad diseases of the brain and central nervous system."[255]

In October 1968, the Georgian Clinic was subsumed by GMHI according to the state Board of Health's directives. The operations of the Georgian Clinic continued within GMHI as a division for the treatment of alcohol and drug abuse. The division's impatient treatment was in Cottage 1 and Cottage 2 while 'daypatient' and outpatient treatment continued in the mansion, thereafter called Cottage 9.[256]

In 1970, Building B, the second largest building, located just behind the main building, was completed at a cost of $2.5 million. Housed there were the following units: Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy, Recreation Therapy, and the Homemaking Unit of Vocational Rehabilitation. A significant portion of Building B was dedicated to Occupation Therapy, including areas for ceramics, woodworking, photography, and art. Another large unit was Recreation Therapy with its basketball court size gymnasium, suitable for basketball, shuffleboard, dance therapy, dances, and volleyball, among other activities. A stage at the south end of the gym was used for performances and other programs. The Homemaking Unit of Building B housed a mock 'home' for transitional therapy.[257]

In 1973, the outpatient program of the Georgian Clinic was assigned to the North DeKalb Mental Health Center, a program of the DeKalb County Board of Health. The

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[255]Sylvia Wrobel, "Emory Considering Possibilities If State Closes Mental Health Institute," *Emory Report*, 50, no. 12 (November 1997), accessed October 29, 2014. http://www.emory.edu/EMORY_REPORT/erarchive/1997/November/ernovember.10/11_10_97GMHI.html.

[256]See GMHI 1972 memo (GMHI Archive, unpublished document), 9.

[257]See ibid.

Georgian Clinic was then able to focus solely on outpatient alcoholism treatment. Under these terms, the mansion was renamed the DeKalb Addiction Clinic (DAC) and continued to provide services thru the mid-1990s for drug and alcohol addiction. By 1995, however, the mansion itself—or its upkeep—was reaching well beyond the confines of DAC's budget. By that point, most of the clients were homeless and paid what they could (on a sliding scale), if anything, for their treatment.[258] Einat Toledano, DAC director, estimated that even in 1995 when the building was in full use, it would require $1.5 - $5 million to restore the mansion.[259] The mansion was falling apart, and there were no funds to keep it running.[260]

In August 1997, the Georgia Department of Human Resources proposed closing GMHI, recognizing that it was the costliest mental health facility in the state, operating at $435 per patient daily with an annual budget of $23 million.[261] Ten months later, on Jun 30, 1998, the facility was closed, following the transfer of all remaining patients/clients to Atlanta Regional Hospital and to community settings, as was the trend of deinstitutionalization in the 1990s. Keeping patients out of hospitals was cost-effective, but it was also reflective of a change of perspective in the mental health community; patients do better in community settings than in the stigma-laden asylums of old, so the

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[258]See David Joyner, "Briarcliff Mansion, 76 Years Old, Needs Face Lift," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 22, 1995, J1.
[259]See David Joyner, "Mansion: Colorful History, Even a Zoo," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 22, 1995, J2.
[260]See "Porter/Kelly Architects," in "Documentation of An Historic Place," which includes an un-annotated master plan from 1979 to rehabilitate the mansion. At the time $1.4 million was needed. The document states: "This first step is a broad brush evaluation presented on behalf of the Department of Human Resources' desire to renovate the existing facilities to accommodate the program and operational requirements of the Addiction Clinic, while restoring the architectural features of the building to their original state and preserving the architectural character and heritage associated with the property. The Master Plan seeks to major goals. First, the creation of an environment condusive (sic) to the rehabilitation of a drug and alcohol addicted patient, and, secondly, the renovation of a historically significant building.
[261]See "Local and Area Briefings," *The Augusta Chronicle*, August 21, 1997, accessed October 28, 2013. http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/1997/08/21/met_213302.shtml.

thought went. Sure, some patients require the benefits of the inpatient treatment, but a vast majority can benefit from outpatient services. This approach was aided by a continual boom in psychological pharmaceuticals which occurred in tandem with these moves.

This move reflected nationwide trends, but also complemented the particular milieu of Georgia state policy at the time. "The move away from hospitalization began in 1993 when the Department of Human Resources appointed community boards with members who have suffered from mental illness," notes a 1997 *The Augusta Chronicle* article.[262] "The idea, said Rep. Buddy Childers," who introduced the 1993 state bill that changed state policy, was to "listen to patients, who should know what's best for the mentally ill."[263] By putting consumers on the boards which made the decisions that shaped services, and therefore by placing a high value on patients' quality of life, the boards recognized the potential long-term stigma and psychological scarring one might encounter due to (often unnecessarily) institutionalization. Their move to deinstitutionalize mental health patients reduced hospital admissions by 30% and saved the state millions of dollars.

Disrepair

In the final years of GMHI, the age of the buildings, especially the mansion, became a prominent problem. Sometime in the late 1980s, twenty-five non-violent white-collar first-offenders on probation (and in need of community service to fulfill their

[262]Morris News Service, "Mental Health Funds Redirected," *The Augusta Chronicle*, November 22, 1997, accessed October 28, 2013. http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/1997/11/22/met_217893.shtml.
[263]Ibid.

probation) contributed to the work of repairing the aging estate. "The men did a variety of chores," writes Chuck Bell, "from rewiring lighting fixtures to stripping and repainting the columns on the front porch."[264] Bell also notes that most of the glass was broken in the greenhouses and "there was a 10-year old oak tree growing through the middle of one of them."[265] But the tree was removed and the greenhouses were repaired. Inside the mansion, one probation volunteer painstakingly removed years of soot that covered the east mural of the solarium, thereby restoring it to its (near) original condition.

The greenhouses, after much needed restoration, were reopened in November 1989. Their restoration was funded by private donations, local businesses, about $2500 dollars in donations, and "more than 9,000 hours of community service labor."[266] Reports suggest that the work would have cost $150,000 were it not for the 'volunteer' work. *DeKalb News/Sun* reporter, Lisa Tellis, described the renovation as "an ugly ducking's transformation into a gleaming swan."[267] Tellis adds:

> [Probation Officer Rick] Maher and his crew began cleaning up the area, with the intention of making it safe. They've done that and more. All new wooden pieces were made by the offenders for the frame, an offender's girlfriend designed the red and white stained glass work that graces one of the doorways, and another prisoner designed a 'welcome' mural for one of the walls.[268]

At the time, Office Maher, the probation officer in charge of the greenhouse restorations, had an ambitious five-year plan that included turning the pool area into a public theater.[269] This never happened.

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[264]Chuck Bell, "Monument to Eccentric Candler Goes on the Historic Register," *Atlanta Journal*, DeKalb Extra, 9 February 1989
[265]Bell.
[266]See "Briarcliff" in National Register.
[267]Lisa Tellis, "Maher and His Manpower," *The DeKalb News/Sun*, March 16, 1988, page 2b.
[268]Tellis, 3b.
[269]Maher's actual title was community service coordinator for the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

With the greenhouses restored and operable once again, Fernbank Science Center was given permission to use the greenhouses (rent free) for educational programs during the week and tours on Sundays for the interested public.[270] Fernbank Museum was being built on the grounds that originally housed the Fernbank greenhouses, so Briarcliff functioned as a temporary home for those plants while the museum was built. "On Sundays, open houses are held at the greenhouses," notes a June 6, 1990 *DeKalb News/Sun* article, "and you can get advice on gardening, and even the gift of a plant for visiting."[271]

National Register of Historic Places

In the summer of 1988, the 10-acre plot that surrounds and includes the mansion, zoo, guest house, pool, greenhouses, gardens, and servants quarters was added to the National Register of Historic Places.[272] It was added to the Register in hopes of being able to gain access to grants for restoration that are only available or more easily available to properties on the Register. The purpose of applying to the Register was

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[270]To be more precise, the Fernbank Museum of Natural History was being built on Clifton Rd. The DeKalb County School System, which owned Fernbank , needed a temporary place to continue the horticultural program while the museum was built.

[271]"Briarcliff," *DeKalb News/Sun*, June 6, 1990.

[272]According to the Historic Preservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources: "National Register designation makes properties eligible for federal grant assistance for preservation purposes. Owners of National Register properties may qualify for tax benefits gained through the charitable contribution of preservation easements to nonprofit organizations. Owners of income-producing depreciable properties listed in the National Register are eligible for federal tax credits for rehabilitation work, which meets preservation standards. National Register listing does not place obligations or restrictions on the use or disposition of property. National Register listing is not the same as local historic district zoning or local landmark designation. National Register listing does not encourage public acquisition or access to property." See "The National Register of Historic Places, Historic Preservation Fact Sheet (Historic Preservation Section; Georgia Department of Natural Resources). The application process is a laborious and thorough 17-step process. The site registration can be accessed from The National Park Service at http://focus.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/88001167.

always in service of restoring the mansion.[273] In fact, Martha Pollock, DeKalb Addiction Center director in 1989, stated that "restoration and recognition of the building had been a dream for many years—since she began working at the center 21 years ago."[274] That dream didn't actually begin to actualize until the DeKalb Addiction Center's commission on renovation decided to pursue Register status in 1986. The application was submitted to the National Park Service just under two years later.

[273]See Jason Smoot, "Briarcliff Goes on Historic Register Through Efforts of Employees, Friends," February 22, 1989, 7a.; in State Archives file.
[274]Smoot, 7b.

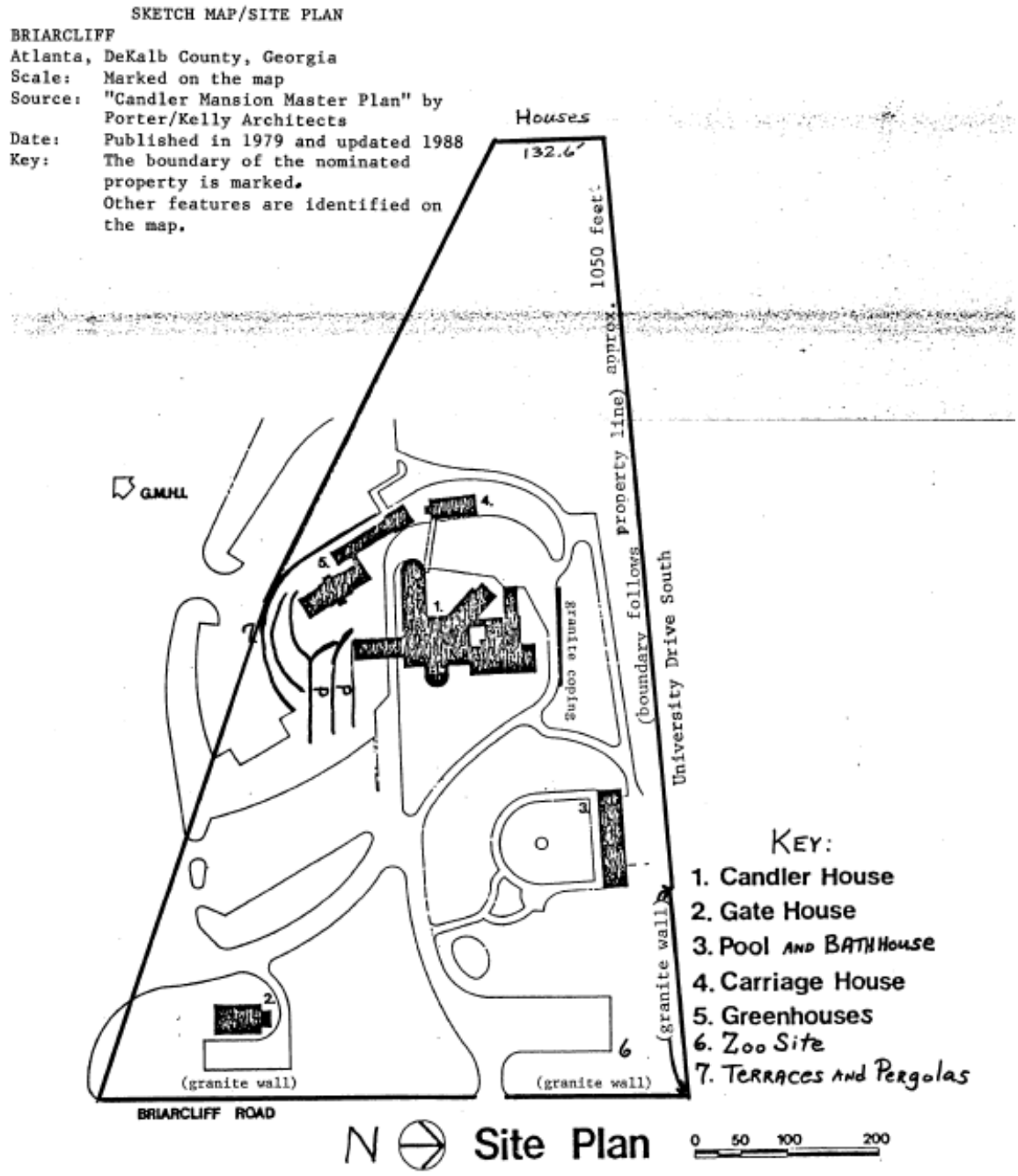

Figure 12. Map of the nine acres designated as historical Briarcliff, as submitted as part of the National Register of Historic Place Registration Form.[275]

A team of researchers assembled to complete the documents needed for the Register application. Chief among them was Jose Tavel, who was a Georgia Tech architecture student enrolled in a building renovation class. The class had an assignment

[275]National Register of Historic Places, 16.

provide research information to Ken Thomas, historian at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the state department that holds the archival material of such places as Briarcliff. In service of the Department of Natural Resources, the students were to research a predetermined list of properties in need of rehabilitation. Jose Tavel selected Briarcliff, he remembers, on account of there being a good bit of research readily available about the property, and the family that once lived there. Many people contributed to the Register application, but Tavel's research was chief among them. His research led to a large report called "Documentation of an Historical Place." That document supplied the information needed for the Register application.

The large document that was supplied as an application for the Register was a very helpful resource for compiling the history of Briarcliff.[276] A particularly interesting part of the application is the section titled "Statement of Significance," which is broken down into three areas of significance: architecture, social history, and entertainment/recreation. Presumably, this is the argument for why this place should be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Regarding its architectural significance, the application claims, "[T]he house is significant as a fine example of a mansion built in the Georgian Revival style by a trained Atlanta-based, and Georgia-born architect, Charles E. Frazier (1884-1939)."[277] It

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[276]Atlanta architect José Taval was a graduate student in architecture at George Tech when an assignment came thru to document a historic site in Atlanta. A list of locations was given to the students, and seeing that the Briarcliff campus was widely mentioned in newspaper articles—so his research would be relatively light—Taval jumped at the opportunity to have an easy-A. What he didn't know was that his research project would be perhaps the main contribution to the documentation that was necessary to satisfy the requirements of the National Register application. His project ended up being the very research that would lead to the Register application. "Documentation of An Historic Place: Briarcliff Georgian Clinic, DeKalb Addiction Center" dated December 1986 was the document that eventually led to the National Register application and, of course, proved to be an invaluable resource for this dissertation. Taval's original project no longer exists, though he contributed greatly to the application process for the Register application.
[277]National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, Page 1.

continues, "In addition to its size, style, and details, it includes some features not found even in the usual large house: a summer porch/pavilion, a solarium, a third-floor ballroom, and an original Music Room (now DeOvies Hall)" which it describes as "one of the most outstanding large rooms of its kind in Atlanta."[278] It further mentions the significance of the buff-colored brick, the pergolas, the fireplaces and mantels, the Italian marble, and the greenhouses/hothouses.

Citing its significance in 'recreational history' the application mentions the importance of the Briarcliff Pool. "It was a very important, semi-public recreation facility for the Druid Hills area. While there were other public pools, this was perhaps the only one in Atlanta that was on a private estate in the midst of a residential neighborhood."[279] In the same section, the zoo is described as "one of the finest private zoos in the southeast [that] became the nucleus for the modern Atlanta public zoo."[280]

Briarcliff's 'social' historical significance is solely couched on the laurels of Asa Candler Jr. whom the application describes as the son of the president of Coca-Cola, a preeminent real estate developer and investor who developed the Briarcliff Hotel (already on the Register). It further mentions the Briarcliff Pool the commercial laundry, and the zoo. The home is of further significance because its builder and only person to use the mansion as a private home, also developed Westview Cemetery, "Atlanta's main and most prestigious privately-own cemetery," and sold the city its first airfield, Candler Field, which became Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.[281]

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[278]Ibid.
[279]Ibid.
[280]Ibid.
[281]National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, Page 1.

Reading through the National Register application it is clear that the mansion was a candidate for the Register equally because of the home, its use, and its owner, whom it claims was a primary aid in the development of Druid Hills.

Emory University

In 1998, Emory University purchased the entire 42-acre complex for $2.9 million under the condition that it had to be used for specifically academic purposes and could not be sold without the state's explicit authorization.[282] (It was expected that, due to asbestos, the cost to completely renovate the campus would be as much as $100 million.) Emory planned to use the site as a technology incubator, one that would house projects by researchers at both Emory and Georgia Tech. An August 20, 1998, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article explains, "Part of the property will be used for a new Emory-Georgia Tech program designed to launch new biotechnology companies that produce diagnostic tests, medical devices and drugs."[283] At the time, Emory had medicine but no engineering and Tech had engineering but no medicine. This was seen as a way of combining forces to foster biotechnological innovation. Together they would be the Biotechnology Development Center.

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[282]This was more than a bargain for 42 acres of land in Druid Hills. The property was appraised for $9.6 million. See Mickey H. Gramig, "Plans For Transformation of Property Moved Quietly," *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, August 14, 1998, F2.

[283]David Beasley, "Emory Facility Won't Be Disruption, Neighbors Say," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, August 20, 1998, JB3.

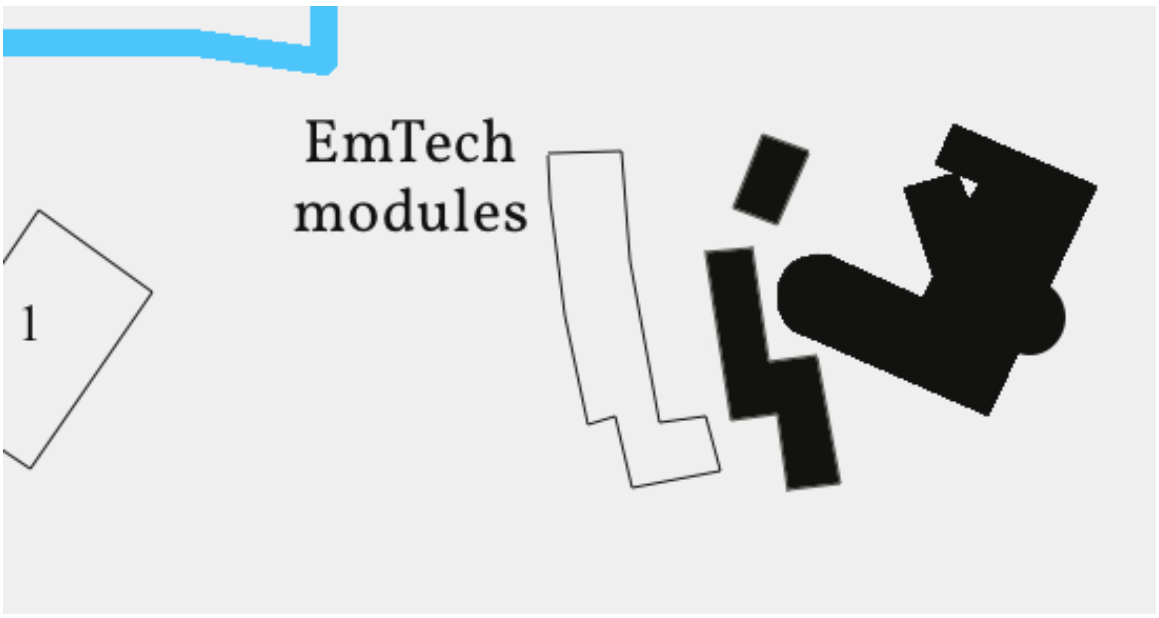

Figure 13. Map of EmTech modules. A group of six modular buildings were built to the west of the greenhouses for the EmTech venture.[284]

The biotech venture was expected to be a magnet for at least a dozen technology companies and it was projected that "over a 10-year period, the firms would create more than 12,000 new jobs with total cumulative wages of $284 million a year" pumping "an average of $29 million a year into state and local tax coffers, according to the Emory proposal."[285] That's an estimated $2.4 billion economic impact in the first ten years. Given that prediction, it's unsurprising that Governor Zell Miller would state, "I can't think of a more beneficial use of this property for the state."[286] Emory, the state, and the community had high hopes for the biotech joint venture. Rod Bowlden, deputy director of the State Properties Commission, the governing body that approved the $2.9 million deal, exclaimed, "[T]his is going to be a fabulous thing that they're going to build. This could be the start of something like a Silicon Valley."[287]

[284]ESRI, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.
[285]Gramig, F2.
[286]Ibid.
[287]Ibid.

Because the Briarcliff Campus—or Emory West, as it was called when it was first acquired—was located in Druid Hills historic district, meaning that any renovation is "governed by more than 100 pages of design guidelines intended to ensure that all construction and exterior renovation blends with the existing architecture of the neighborhood."[288] Original plans for Emory's renovation initially included the mansion, according to this article, which cites Betty Willis who was Emory's director of community affairs. While many commercial real estate developers tried to put their name in the hat to try to purchase Briarcliff, a special bill that authorized selling the property only to a public or private educational entity or government development authority was passed through state congress, leaving the candidate pool quite small. In that pool was Emory, and plans were already well underway to acquire the land.

Acquiring the land was the primary objective; following through with the EmTech proposal was secondary by far. Under the agreement of the purchase, there was no explicit language necessitating the Emory-Tech project; the main objective, it seems, was to acquire the land and deal with its use later, the EmTech proposal being the first one on the docket. With time, however, that proposal fell through. Georgia Tech wanted all of its facilities closer to their main campus. Further, Emory had recently acquired Emory East, what is now the Clairmont Campus, and plans to develop that site were both a higher priority and imminent. Nevertheless, Emory did move several institutes and units into the two main buildings of the former GMHI while leaving the mansion empty. Before long, Building A and Building B of the old GMHI were repurposed for office space, the three main occupants being university facilities, psychiatry (labs, research),

[288]Beasley, JB3. The article adds that "Emory will have to present construction and renovation plans to DeKalb's Historic Preservation Commission for approval. If a project is rejected, Emory could appeal to DeKalb Board of Commissioners and ultimately to the courts."

and continuing education. A few modular buildings were constructed behind the mansion's greenhouses for small EmTech initiatives, but that is as far as the incubator project progressed.

The loss of the EmTech initiative was not a total loss for Emory University, for in the end, it had acquired a very large parcel of land just one mile from the main campus. Though the promises of the Emory-Tech partnership were great—$2.4 billion!—the acquisition of the land was perhaps as important to the university as the projected profitability of what might occur there. For this reason, Emory has been diligent about its use and plans for the Briarcliff Campus.

About the same time that Emory acquired the Briarcliff Campus, it had also retained the Baltimore, Maryland, architectural and planning firm Ayers/Saint/Gross to develop the university's master plan. In 1999, the firm also produced a master plan specifically for the 'Emory West' campus. This master plan indicates that Emory never planned on staying in the old GMHI buildings for very long. It states, "Prior to the beginning of this physical planning process, a study was done of the existing structures on the site to determine their condition and feasibility for proposed use. It was determined that excluding the Candler Mansion, the existing structures should be demolished."[289] Whatever would replace these existing structures would have to conform to the master plan's guiding principles for the site. They "should promote and reflect a spirit of invention and inquiry that reflects the academic mission statement of Emory University, and will benefit the state of Georgia as a whole."[290] The master plan from 1999, cited here, was designed, it seems, with the EmTech project in mind as it proposes

[289]"Emory West," Emory University and Ayers/Saint/Gross, master plan document obtained from Emory architect's office, 1999 p. 3.
[290]"Emory West," 3.

razing all existing buildings (except the mansion) and building an entirely new campus with 50% of the square footage devoted to "bio-medical functions" and 50% devoted to "uses of Emory University." It proposes several schemes for building that include retention ponds, terraced construction, and a campus quad structure. Of course, none of this happened; however, the research behind this master plan remains a guiding document should the right idea come along for developing the campus.

Since 1998 there have been four major proposals for use of the Briarcliff campus and a few smaller ideas. The first came from Atlanta Public Schools (APS). With the need for a new elementary school in the area, APS proposed completely rehabbing the mansion and building onto the existing structure to create a new school building. They would sign a long-term lease for use of the land and sponsor all renovation and construction, which would have been in the tens of millions of dollars. The plan did not go thru for four main reasons. First, the amount of traffic for the school would require new entryways in the western portion of the property. This would in turn necessitate the acquisition of residential property and would greatly increase the traffic on Briarcliff Road. Second, building an elementary school on the campus would mean that should the right idea come along, there would no longer be a reserved space for Emory to build on. Third, Emory's strategic vision does not delineate fostering primary education; it's not apart of the mission of the university, and certainly whatever happens to this land would have to be squarely aligned with the university's mission. Finally, there was the little problem that the Briarcliff campus was located in DeKalb County, not Fulton County, so the politics of building a Fulton County school in DeKalb County would have caused a big mess.

Another proposal came in 2005-06 from an Emory task force, the Faculty Committee on the Future Development of Emory University's Briarcliff Campus. A memo from that committed titled "Suggested Guiding Principles" states that the committee, comprised of eleven faculty members with appointments throughout the university, was tasked with proposing ideas about uses for the Briarcliff Campus. This included the development of "(1) a set of overarching principles that could be used to help determine the best academic use of this site, including which academic programs or complementary uses might be placed at Briarcliff, and (2) identify specific academic uses for the site as art of early phase development."[291] In response to this charge, the committee proposed several ideas, which included: storing certain library collections, relocating the Center for Humanistic Inquiry, developing a Center for Advanced Study, the implementation of faculty and staff housing, incorporating amenities for such housing (e.g., childcare, exercise facilities, and retail elements such as a café or coffee shop), provide space for the Emeritus College, create flex space to be used by new or growing academic units, an outdoor gathering space, and research facilities. The committee ruled out the development of tall buildings, regular use classroom space, dedicated use by any one particular school or unit, or a complete use by central administration. It is clear from the committees guiding principles that this was to be a mixed-use planned committee that would both complement the vision of the university and advance it in a unique and generative manner. This preliminary proposal was made in January of 2006; now, seven years later, and following the economic downturn of 2007-09, these plans have been left dormant.

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[291]Faculty Committee on the Future Development of Emory University's Briarcliff Campus, "Suggested Guiding Principles," unpublished task force document, 2005-2006 school year.

Third, at different times the idea of moving part of the university library holdings to Briarcliff and relocating the Carlos Museum were proposed. The Carlos Museum, centrally located on the main campus quad, had no interest in relocating, if even it would provide more space for growth and parking; the advantages of being centrally located were too great. The idea of moving part of university library holdings into a permanent storage facility seems to be an idea that has stayed near the top of the list; however, of course, this would only be an idea that would utilize a small fraction of the forty-two acres available.

A final proposal, one in which there is little documentation, was the renovation of the mansion by the Cathy family, the founders of Chic-fil-a, or a philanthropic arm of that corporation. Their idea was to completely renovate that mansion at a cost of $20-30 million and turn the mansion into a temporary residential home for families of cancer patients at Emory's hospital. This plan was an ideal proposal because it placed the financial burden for renovating the mansion on the shoulders of the Cathy family while it also provided an asset to the University, thereby fulfilling the requirement that any use align with the mission of the university. The deal came very close to happening, but sometime after the Cathy family was given a tour of the mansion, they unexplainably pulled out of the deal.

There have been smaller ideas that have emerged too. Betty Willis, Senior Associate Vice President for Governmental and Community Affairs, has long served as the university liaison to the neighborhood groups that surround Emory's campuses. Willis has also been a member of the Druid Hills Civic Association and remembers a small group of Association members who met a few times to brainstorm ideas for the

campus. They even involved Katherine Graham Candler in an attempt to appeal to the Coca-Cola Corporation, but Coca-Cola has shown no interest in the Candler mansion or the Briarcliff Campus. A second idea she recalls was called 'Pool Together' and was an initiative spearheaded by local private school Paideia and a few other schools that wanted to rehabilitate the Candler pool for the schools' use. This idea never got off the ground. A 2004 document titled "Briarcliff Campus Feasibility Study," produced by master planners Ayers/Saint/Gross proposes a residential scheme for the Briarcliff Campus that would include seventy-five multi-family unites, one-hundred and thirty-five attached townhomes, ninety single family detached homes, and residential amenities (club house, swimming pool, parking decks, retail, and central park).

In the summer of 2011, the three western most cottages were removed, due to their susceptibility to break-ins and therefore liability. Among these three cottages was the children's ward, the southernmost of the three. It once had a jungle-gym type playground for older kids in the back (west), beneath the pine trees. And it had an enclosed playground on the southern side of the building for the smaller children. Until its demolition it was filled with typical playground toys and a basketball hoop. In later years, however, once all the children left, kudzu slowly swallowed the entire area of the enclosed playground.

In December 2012, Mike Mandl, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, projected that Emory would completely evacuate the Briarcliff Campus sometime between mid-2013 and mid-2014. This would be fifteen years after the master plan suggested demolishing the buildings. Sometime shortly thereafter, Mandl suggested, all buildings, minus the mansion (and its period components), would be razed on account

of several factors: As might be expected of a fifty-year old building (Building A), the cost to maintain facilities (e.g., HVAC and roof) reached a point that it would be cheaper to relocate all existing offices to rental spaces. Further, for years the primary occupants of the campus, Continuing Education and various Department of Psychiatry programs, have complained (along with other smaller programs) about the building's condition, requesting that they be relocated elsewhere. (Other occupants include the Jane Fonda Center, the James Weldon Johnson Institute, and several other smaller offices in Building A.) Finally, as it concerns Building A and Building B, the only two buildings of GMHI that are still used, the university sees no historical value in maintaining the buildings, especially when its tenants are displeased and the cost to maintain the buildings has finally proved cost prohibitive. There have also been numerous reports of health concerns related to environmental issues of the occupied buildings.

Orienting Briarcliff

The purpose of this chapter is to provide historical context to the land that would become Emory's Briarcliff Campus. It's one way of answering the question, What's the story of this place? The original photographs that are spread throughout this dissertation are, collectively, another way to answer that question. A mindful photography of place requires attention to such historical accounting.

Briarcliff as place is a theme implied throughout this chapter. The historical narrative begins long before the Candlers owned the 42-acre plot because, while the Candlers' period of inhabitation is perhaps the time that put Briarcliff on the map, so to speak, it's only one inhabitation among many. The story of this place extends back

hundreds, if not thousands, of years, far beyond available historical records. That untold story – the narrative that predates historical record – is just as significant to the story of this place, even if it can only be alluded to through a cursory historical accounting of Native American history in the area.

Similarly, I've paid attention, however brief, to the narrative of the development of Atlanta as a distinct location and Druid Hills as a neighborhood. The story of Briarcliff-as-place cannot be told without the context out of which Briarcliff emerged in the early 20th century, when Asa Candler and his son, Asa Candler, Jr., introduced this 42-acre plot to the neighborhood and city as both aristocratic estate and semi-public recreational facility. The same logic undergirds the considerable amount of research about the Candler family in particular.

Briarcliff is not an isolated parcel of land; it is a place that derives its meaning, historically and contemporarily, from its rich history, which includes today. My photographs capitalize on the latter part of that timeline, accentuating a particular perspective on Briarcliff's story today. The historical narrative in this chapter aims to do the same but from a different angle, by describing how Creek Nation land became distributable property of the state of Georgia, which became in turn an industrial farming complex, aristocratic estate, addiction recovery center, mental health facility, and college campus. The story of Briarcliff is of course incomplete, open-ended, but I leave it here as frame for the accompanying photographs and the concomitant discussion of place.


















The
Asylum




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Chapter 3

Place: Yi-Fu Tuan and Robert Polidori

Introduction

The idea that the field of geography should include an experiential element emerged in the 1970s with particular attention to the term "place." Among the scholars thinking about place and (what would be called) humanistic geography was a Chinese-born scholar named Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan's widely acclaimed *Topophilia* (1974) ushered in a wave of scholarship intent on studying geography through the ways in which humans interact with their environment. Tuan acknowledged the importance of studying longitudes and latitudes, topographical investigations, and the decidedly objective studies of the field of geography. However, what interested him more—and what he felt was conspicuously absent from the scholarship—were the ways in which humans interact with their environment and the ways in which human attitudes, values, perceptions, and experiences undergird the places and spaces that make-up our physical world.[1] In short, Tuan brought the subjective human experience to the center of geography. To speak directly of that experience, Tuan coined the term topophilia, the affective bond between people and the material world. That bond is established by experiences, by knowing a place, frequenting a place, making a place part of one's daily life.

I'm curious how this way of thinking about geography might inform a reading of ruins photographs, and how that reading of ruins photographs might inform both the

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[1]Since the mid-1960s, the thrust of the environmental-ecological movement has been in two directions. One is applied: what can be done about rat-infested tenements and polluted water? The other is theoretical and scientific, the attempt to understand the complex forces that maintain the natural world. Neither approach is directly concerned with the formation of attitudes or values." See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1.

discussion about ruin porn and the larger document at hand, Briarcliff. Toward that end, I've constructed three main sections in this chapter, one that introduces Tuan's understanding of experiential learning in place, paying special attention to his understanding of home, place making, and the foreigner's gaze; one that explores the work of one of the preeminent fine art photographers of ruins, Robert Polidori, paying special attention to the status of Polidori's *After the Flood* and its relationship to ruin porn, all the while reading Polidori through a Tuanian lens; and finally a concluding section.

Tuan and Humanism

Tuan is a humanist first; it's his humanistic convictions that ultimately influence his understanding of geography.[2] In his latest book, *Humanist Geography*, he begins:

> [Humanist geography] empowers us to be engaged productively with certain questions that are incumbent upon us as thinking men and women to raise—and to raise them with a sense of urgency, for our time on Earth as individuals is the briefest. The questions are: "What is it—what does it mean—to be human? More specifically, what does being human mean for me?"[3]

In what functions as a retrospective of his career and a summary of his scholarly postulations, what it all comes back to for Tuan is: What does being human mean to me? It's the question that Tuan suggests should be both the guiding principle of one's personal journey and the trajectory of the field of geography.

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[2]See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Humanist Geography: An Individual's Search for Meaning* (Staunton, VA: George F. Thompson, 2012), 17: "A consequence of Renaissance humanism was that it initiated a growing appreciation of the individual. But, in later times, a counter-movement, which came to be known as the "social sciences," chose to underplay the individual as against the group. Human geography, which emphasizes place and community, might be considered a part of that movement. The discipline has people but almost no individual with a personal name. In using the expression "humanist geography," then, I juxtapose two words that highlight their mutually supportive yet also tense and even antagonistic relationship."

[3]Yi-Fu Tuan, *Humanist Geography*, 3.

Place and Space

Place is a common term, a verb and a noun, a reference to my home ("my place") and a particular spot in the world. For Tuan, however, place has a special meaning. The corners of the world that possess meaning are places and the area between places are what Tuan calls space. Place is meaningful space; place is space yet felt. Place is known; space is mystery. Place is pause, the sort of pause that lasts long enough for an attachment of any kind to form or a value to be felt; space is movement. We travel across space to get to a place; space is what exists between places. At the same time, a space is always available to develop into a place. "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value."[4] Place is valuable space, a "concentration of value."[5] Space is wide-open, untamed freedom, potentially dangerous, affectively available, and yet lacking in human meaningfulness, or at least the sort of meaningfulness that emerges from first-hand experience.[6]

While place is the term that receives the most attention in humanist geography, we need both space and place in our lives. "Human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom," writes Tuan. "In open space once can become intensely aware of place," he adds, "and in the solitude of a sheltered place the vastness of space beyond acquires a haunting presence."[7] At the same time, space can be a symbol of freedom – the open American west, the vast ocean, the wilderness. "Space lies open," adds Tuan; "it suggests the future and invites action."[8] One could say

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[4]Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 6.
[5]Tuan, *Space and Place,* 12.
[6]A national forest may be a significant, meaningful place, but in this lexical universe the forest would be a space.
[7]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 53.
[8]Ibid., 54.

that space is always luring the human into experience by its open-ended potential. We appreciate the groundedness and familiarity of place, but we long for the unknown possibility of space – "it's like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed."[9]

Topophilia

Topophilia is the coupling of sentiment with place.[10] It's the word Tuan uses to speak of the significance of the human relationship with the physical world as central to a complete understanding of geography. (That experiential, sentimental coupling is the way Tuan joins the independent focus of humanism with the globalist perspective of geography.) "Relatively few works attempt to understand how people feel about space and place, to take into account the different modes of experience (sensorimotor, tactile, visual, conceptual), and to interpret space and place as images of complex—often ambivalent—feelings," wrote Tuan in the late 1970s.[11] His second major work, *Space and Place*, fleshed out his understanding of experience, which ranges from how vision develops in infants to how architectural designs inculcate a particular set of experiences.

Experience

Experience is key for Tuan; it's what he describes as the "cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs reality," ranging from "the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization."[12] Experience is an act of learning, a way of

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[9]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 54.
[10]Tuan, *Topophilia*, 113.
[11]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 7.
[12]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 8.

knowing. The Western academy in particular has long dichotomized thoughts and feelings, thoughts being the applicable components of rational academic inquiry.[13] In humanist geography, however, experience is the bridge that unites person to place. As such, it's common for humanist geographers to include significant portions of first-hand testimony, including their own, in their research.

Feelings are often either unknown or unarticulated and can be subconscious. The deep meanings associated with a place accrue over time, even over years and decades. A sense of place is rarely felt within seconds; it's the steady, sometimes unrealized accretion of value over time. Our experience of place and our sense of place is an amalgam of the smells and sounds, movements and routines, acquaintances and memories of a particular location, all of which typically take time to develop and become a subconscious part of our experience. At the same time, an intense but brief experience can be powerful enough to change our lives.

Home

People typically experience place most meaningfully in their homes, the locations where we typically place the most value. For Tuan, home is the apotheosis of place. It undergirds our understanding of global citizenship, patriotism, and membership in social clubs, all of which are derivative of our need to connect to and feel safe at home. What distinguishes home from every other place, apart from the magnitude of accrued value, is that, Tuan writes, "Every night we regularly lose our distancing consciousness, our identity and self, in restorative oblivion."[14] Home is the place in which we feel the most

[13]Ibid., 10.
[14]Tuan, *Humanist Geography*, 3.

ourselves, the most secure, and feel the most freedom to drift away from that self into unconsciousness. "Although I don't regard home as me," writes Tuan, "I can't help feeling that with the cessation of breath," – here Tuan is referring to his own death – "the 'I' that lingers a little longer is not the corpse but rather my home, a unique arrangement of furniture, books, pictures, and knickknacks that is me, before it, too, is dismantled and dispersed."[15]

Making and Unmaking Place

In humanist geography the idea of intentionally transforming space into place is called making place, while the felt effect of making place is referred to as a sense of place. One makes place by establishing (or transferring) rituals or by adding personal touches like sentimental objects or items that appear to the senses like art, plants, landscaping. A place is made, so to speak, when its value is self-contained and can only be experienced in *that* place. Its sense of place is the unique identity one has when experiencing a place. Both place making and a sense of place can be deliberate endeavors – think adding trees to a university campus – or they can be incidental.

Similarly, if a place loses the qualities, objects, events, or people that undergird its identity, that place will be drained of meaning and value, and the persistence of this lack will be an irritant to those who formerly appreciate the sense of that place. In the built world, the many post-industrial ruins of Detroit come to mind. Like Detroit's factories, with time many significant places – especially domestic, commercial, industrial, and

[15]Ibid., 28.

institutional places – devolve into mere space.[16] When it comes to city planning and preservation, what aspects of the city deserve preservation? What types of places possess the least amount of projected future value?

Tuan suggests that people routinely devalue places that he calls "societal failures": prisons, mental health facilities, and 'workhouses.' "These are removed with no regret or second thought," he suggests, because the activities held within the walls of those places are regarded with little value.[17] One might also speculate that the lives of those who once occupied those places – and their experiences of those places – are regarded with little value. Similarly, places of passive occupation, such as factories, can be quickly devalued as markets shift and technology improves, replacing human hands with robotic arms. At the same time, the highly regarded 'good bones' of brick factories are often the sites of renovated domestic living. In Atlanta, for instance, within a few mile radius, there are the Pencil Factory Lofts, the Telephone Factory Lofts, and the Cotton Mill Lofts, all former industrial places, devalued for a time, then remade as apartment living.

The types of places that are made an unmade indicate the values of those doing the making and unmaking. Similarly places are made and unmade as a result of the values placed on the types of people associated with those places. And of course, the value placed on the activities or purpose of a place (by those doing the making or ummaking) are directly connected to their making or unmaking. At the same time, those places that are protected – protected so that they can be made or unmade in the future –

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[16]Tuan suggests that "in the course of time, most public symbols lose their status as places and merely clutter up space." (*Space and Place*, 164.) For further consideration of the social construction of space see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991).
[17]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 196.

those places and those decisions are indicative of values and priorities. Suffice it to say that the demographic intersectionality of a place – its class, race, age, position in relation to systems of power, etc. – directly impinges upon how commercial and municipal forces attribute value to a given place.

Often it is time alone that un-makes a place, as cultural, economic, and social values shift. Tuan explains:

> Objects that are held in awe by one people can easily be overlooked by another. Culture affects perception. Yet certain objects, both natural and man-made, persist as places through eons of time, outliving the patronage of particular cultures. Perhaps any large feature in the landscape creates its own world, which may expand or contract with the passing concerns of the people, but which does not completely lose its identity.[18]

Tuan suggests that even when time does seem to un-make a place, traces of the place may persist, creating geographical palimpsests. At the same time, when a place is remade or repurposed or otherwise transformed to take on a different use, traces of each instantiation may remain. This may be physical remains of the place – for instance, a vintage industrial machine moved to the lobby of one of the aforementioned factory lofts – or it may be a feeling or sense that persists. Whatever the case, using the metaphor of the palimpsest is helpful because it shows how in certain, typically historical, places the accrual of several different instantiations of place can be simultaneously, if unequally, evident in one place, giving that place a very unique character and sense. One method for becoming familiar with a given place is to investigate these layers.

Strangers and Ruins

[18]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 163.

Urban exploration is the activity of exploring abandoned urban spaces, often with the accompaniment of a camera. The allure of trespass and visiting often industrial or institutional scenes of yore is enough to risk falling through rotten floors or arrest. I'll defer to the chapter onruin porn as a way of suggesting why abandoned places are alluring sites of exploration. However, from a Tuanian perspective, the experience of a stranger in place is typically a surface level sensorial encounter that thrives on the enticement of the novel.

Because the visitor will rarely be able to immediately perceive the full affective weight of a place, their contribution is that of the fresh perspective; it's a decidedly visual experience.[19] The visitor will notice aspects of a place to which locals have become inured, because the visitor "judges by appearance, by some formal canon of beauty," Tuan writes.[20] He adds, "The native, by contrast, has a complex attitude derived from his immersion in the totality of his environment."[21] Whereas the visitor's perspective is simple and superficial, the native's experience is complex and immersive.

Visitors to foreign lands and urban explorers alike are seekers of beauty, what Tuan defines as "the sudden contact with an aspect of reality that one has not known before; it is the antithesis of the acquired taste for certain landscapes or the warm feeling for places that one knows well."[22] The visitor's evaluation of a place is "essentially aesthetic," which accounts for why (non-native) urban explorers and ruins photographers can find great appreciation in a building that locals find deleteriously associated with systemic problems experiences in that general place. The urban explorer or ruins

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[19]Tuan, *Topophilia*, 65.
[20]Ibid., 64.
[21]Ibid., 63.
[22]Ibid., 94.

photographer experiences only the surface; they have no experience of the stories, people, rituals, and objects that grant value and meaning. So their (visual) account – often their pictures – of a given abandoned space may inadvertently celebrate the known problems that made that place abandoned to begin with.

Tuan never specifically wrote at length about urban exploration, ruins photography, or ruin porn, the recent phenomenon of the decontextualized fetishization of ruins pictures. But he did write about the relationship between the camera and place. In his latest work, *Humanist Geography*, Tuan notes, "When we look at a painting, we don't ask, 'What lies beyond the picture frame?' With a photograph, we often do: we take for granted that a world lies beyond, just as when we look at a scene we assume that the world doesn't stop at the edge of our peripheral vision."[23] Tuan makes plain here an aspect of the photographic medium that can be overlooked – content exists beyond the frame; in fact, more context exists beyond the frame than in the frame. Even still, the edge of the frame serves as an apt metaphor for the limitations of any picture of place – there's more to be seen, understood, and experienced than what the eye can behold. Ruin porn – the aesthetic appreciation of ruins photographs divorced from the context that allowed for their ruined state – is the disavowal of this basic tenant of photography, more exists beyond the frame. The 'more' that exists beyond the frame is indeed the tree that is just out of view, e.g., but it is also the feeling – the affective experience! – of being in a place. Great photographers can work toward representing that experience, but it will always be derivative of the actual experience.[24]

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[23]Tuan, *Humanist Geography*, 90.
[24]See Tuan, *Space and Place*, 147 and Tuan, *Humanist Geography*, 90.

The prevalence of decay and the concomitant encroachment of the natural world are alluring aspects of urban ruins. The built environment continues to erode while the natural world continues to encroach. Tuan identifies a few reasons why the uncontrolled re-emergence of plant life in the built environment is enticing to us. As cultures develop and progressively urbanize – that is, most people live in or near the city, the built environment – people "begin to take note, and appreciate, the relative simplicities of nature."[25] The natural world becomes the release from the strictures of the built world. Compared to the built environment, which institutes and governs social roles and relationships, the natural environment is astructural and thus imbued with potential.

That potential is alluring. Tuan writes, "People know better who they are and how they ought to behave when the arena is humanly designed."[26] Another way of saying that is that the built environment places restrictions on who we may be and how we may behave. Post-industrial ruins and abandoned urban scenes, with their crumbling structures and encroaching plant life, offer the opposite possibility. Ruins break from the patterns of the humanly designed architectures of both the built environment and the social structure, so we might be wise to interpret urban exploration of these places as the noble pursuit of alternative subjective formation, if even that lofty idea is not consciously present.

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[25]Tuan *Topophilia*, 103.
[26]Tuan, *Space and Place*, 102. Throughout his oeuvre, Tuan explains how "architectural space reveals and instructs," both symbolically and directly. (*Space and Place*, 114.) The setting of a particular place is also instructive. "The body responds, as it has always done, to such basic features of design as enclosure and exposure, verticality and horizontality, mass, volume, interior spaciousness, and light." (*Space and Place*, 116) The built environment is the setting of our experience.

Robert Polidori

Robert Polidori (b. 1951) is a fine art photographer best known for his architectural photographs of weathered, derelict, abandoned, or otherwise changing places – Chernobyl, Havana, Versailles, and post-Katrina New Orleans.[27] His photographs have been collected by every major contemporary art museum in the world, but his journey as a photographer came somewhat by accident.

Polidori's first love was avant-garde filmmaking, criticism, and viewing. He made several of his own in the 1970s, worked as an assistant to the Anthology Film Archives, and eventually completed an MA in film from SUNY Buffalo in 1980. The film scene in New York City in the early 1980s was a competitive landscape. Polidori surveyed the scene, noticed that those receiving all the grants were twice his age and galleries were extremely selective in the work they would show, especially given the fact that films aren't easily commoditized. Disillusioned by the prospects of a future in film, Polidori moved to Paris in 1980 and began experimenting with still images.

While living in France, Polidori was granted access to document the renovations of the Chateau of Versailles, a project he has maintained for over 30 years. Documenting the restorations of Versailles was one of two early projects that he credits for inspiring a career in documenting places. "What we are looking at in these museum restorations is the society's superego," Polidori reflects, "what a society thinks of itself, and how it thinks it should be seen by itself."[28] The artifacts that are displayed, what pieces of

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[27]Polidori was born in Canada but became a US citizen in 2010 and resides in Santa Monica, California. Edwyn Houk Gallery represents Polidori and his photographs typically sell from $20,000 to $50,000. He always prints large, at least three feet on the shortest side. In addition to his fine art work, Polidori takes assignments from print magazines such as *The New Yorker*.

[28]BOMB: Artists in Conversation, "Robert Polidori: by Michèle Gerber Klein," accessed July 15, 2015. http://bombmagazine.org/article/2883/robert-polidori.

French history are displayed are conscious decisions to depict the history of France in a particular (protected) way, and the images he makes there are, thus, "social portraiture."[29] This is what drew Polidori to Versailles, what he describes as "historical revisionism as seen through museum restoration."[30] The rooms at Versailles display much more than the artifacts therein.

The other early project Polidori credits for inspiring his interest in place occurred shortly after he began photographing Versailles. In a 2010 *The Independent* editorial, Polidori explains how in 1985, a friend of his who was an estate agent described to him the uncanny coincidence of three clients all dying within the span of a few days. Each of their homes was vandalized by local youth. Curious to see the "the psychological implications" of these places – scenes of stored memory, interrupted by disinterested intrusion – Polidori convinced his friend to let him visit these apartments and make photographs.[31] "I was convinced that there was something intrinsically historic and psychic about the subject-matter that should be captured," he later reflected.[32] "Upon further reflection I came to regard the implications of the scene as being evocative of the human condition in general."[33] Just a few years after purchasing his first field camera, Polidori had found his niche, the photography of place as what he calls social portraiture.[34]

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[29]BOMB: Artists in Conversation.
[30]Ibid.
[31]Robert Polidori, "Elegantly Wasted: Award-Winning Photographer Robert Polidori Finds Beauty in Disaster," *The Independent*, October 23, 2010, accessed July 14, 2015. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/elegantly-wasted-awardwinning-photographer-robert-polidori-finds-beauty-in-disaster-2111963.html.
[32]Ibid.
[33]Ibid.
[34]BOMB: Artists in Conversation

Early in his photographic career, Polidori was attuned place as both a testimony to memory and a projection of the self. In the vandalized apartment images, he was particularly interested in the aftermath of death, the abandonment of place, and the home as a scene of collected memory. In a very Tuanian way, Polidori was drawn to the photography of place due to the way a place – especially one with an interrupted narrative – can exude a sense of value and meaning.

Tuan speaks in terms of place; Polidori speaks in terms of rooms. Rooms are everything to him. In a 2007 interview, he said, "I never really studied photography; I came to it almost in spite of myself. I got into it because of rooms."[35] He describes rooms as "the exteriorization of the soul life or of personal values."[36] Photographs of rooms are portraits, images of personal meaning. Tchotchkes on a side table, portraits on the wall, even cleaning supplies on a counter, left unattended – these are pieces of a larger story, a composite portrait. Polidori photographs places not to show what he thinks of a person or place but to represent what "that person thinks about him—or herself."[37] His photographs of place are portraits of people mitigated by portraits of the rooms and meaningful ephemera that undergird their values and narrative. Rooms have a sense about them; "soul" is the word Polidori chooses.

Polidori sees a metaphorical connection between a room's relationship with time and a photographs relationship with time. Both a wall in a room and a photograph are "a slice of time that is transfixed and only very slowly degrades its semblance."[38] Rooms contain memories; rooms are memories. To photograph a room is to make a memory of a

[35]BOMB: Artists in Conversation.
[36]Ibid.
[37]Ibid.
[38]Ibid.

memory, or, to be less pedantic: to photograph a room in a home is to focus on memory. Rooms are the physical matter of memories. It's no surprise, then, that Polidori's most successful images are of interior spaces.[39]

So why photograph scenes of devastation? For Polidori, these are the places with the most "traces" of meaning and value; they have soul. Un-peopled places and images of those places ask the viewer to imagine who lived there, how they interacted with this place. At the same time, Polidori is criticized for literally cashing-in on others' misfortune. Recall that his images can sell for as much as $50,000.

Polidori is readily aware of the criticism levied against his work, especially his photographs of ruins: it exploits and fetishizes the ruined places of others by making what is the tragic result of politics, natural disaster, and economic misfortune a beautiful image. "This 'aestheticising,'" he explains, "is considered to be conceptually disturbing since, some argue, it brings a viewer to an experience by which realities and their causes are ultimately trivialised and misrepresented."[40] But Polidori never felt any shame making those early pictures, and he never embellished the scene before him. "If I had made these images intentionally ugly," he wonders, "would my critics have looked at them more carefully or generously?"[41] In all likelihood, no. "And besides," he concludes, "since when was pathos morally inadmissible in the photographic arts?"[42] Polidori concludes his defense by comparing his photography to the Catholic rite of Extreme Unction, the anointing of the sick and dying with prayers and holy oil by an

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[39]Polidori rather unsurprisingly notes, "I would say that the emblematic photographic image is a picture from inside a room looking out. I think this defines photography. It's the metaphor for the notion of first sight. What one saw first." See BOMB: Artists in Conversation.
[40]Polidori.
[41]Ibid.
[42]Ibid.

ordained priest. However, in the case of Polidori, he is anointing "habitats that were permanently interrupted by cataclysm."[43] Polidori sees himself as a priest, his flock as dying places, his photography as an anointing, and his photographs as prayers.

Polidori is curious about "human habitats and environments," which he documents with a large-format film camera. His purpose as a photographer is to "record a visual citation of both past history and the present times within the confines of a single frame."[44] For this reason, he is naturally drawn to palimpsestic architectural places and areas with layered histories; time is a major theme throughout Polidori's work.

The success of his photography is due largely to the access he has secured to typically inaccessible and abandoned locations. The subsequent photographs he makes are almost universally un-peopled. Polidori is an architectural photographer, a photographer of place; his interest is in form, space, construction (or deconstruction, as it were), and a rectilinear perspective. According to his website Polidori's "current work deals with population and urban growth through photographing 'dendritic' cities around the world, including Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro, and Amman."[45] One can surmise from this description that Polidori's attention has turned to documenting overcrowded living environments.

Polidori's artistic predilection is similar to Andrew Moore's – another architectural photographer who shares affection for architectural ruins and Cuba, incidentally – in that both have a formal relationship to space and a thus a seemingly natural appreciation for architectural integrity, especially in the lived or urban environment. When this approach is taken to places of ruin—like Chernobyl—Polidori

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[43]Polidori.
[44]Robert Polidori. n.d., accessed July 15, 2015. http://www.robertpolidori.com/#reception-section.
[45]Ibid.

grants dignity, pause, and beauty to scenes overflowing with detritus and abandonment.[46] In a more compressed way, Polidori's work is similar to Camillo Jose Vergara's longitudinal ghetto studies in the way both men's work suggests a larger narrative.

Polidori's photographs beg for a narrative: What happened here? According to his gallery, Polidori "thinks of rooms as metaphors and vessels for memory—places marked by the signature of lives past and present."[47] Many of his photographs are room studies—photographs that concern one four-walled interior space. These rooms are always lit naturally and are alwyas images that cause the viewer to pause; there's really no such thing as flipping through a Polidori book. His images are heavy with detail thanks to his choice of medium, and his understanding of space and composition produces images with complex layers and movement.

Polidori frequently photographs thresholds and passageways, doorways and hallways. A large percentage of his images possess a way out, so to speak, for the viewer's moving eye, and if the way isn't specifically within the frame, the fall off of light indicates that it's not far away. Polidori's images can be blunt, rectilinear confrontations of a disturbed place. At the same time, they are often quotidian spaces that are typically in some state of dishevelment, so they read as both familiar scenes – oh, yes, this is obviously a schoolroom – and scenes where something has very apparently gone array. From the subtle renovations of his Versailles images to the depictions of a literal nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl, all of Polidori's images capitalize on the amiss.

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[46]See Robert Polidori, *Zones of Exclusion: Pripyat and Chernobyl* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2003).
[47]Edwynn Hook Gallery, "Robert Polidori," accessed July 15, 2015. http://www.houkgallery.com/artists/robert-polidori/.

After the Flood

Making landfall in New Orleans on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina was the fifth hurricane of the 2005 Atlantic season. It was the most costly natural disaster on American soil to date, causing as much as $125 billion in damages and taking at least 1,833 lives. Storm surges caused fifty-three different levee breaks while two-thirds of city's floodwalls catastrophically failed. Eighty percent of the city flooded.

Hurricane Katrina was immediately a visual disaster. National and international news organizations descended on New Orleans and began broadcasting the ruins. Images of rooftop aerial rescues and motorboats travelling up and down flooded neighborhood streets, combined with reporter live-shots in front of decimated houses, floating debris, or displaced cars was commonplace. It was hard to not be aware of the level of devastation wrought on New Orleans.

Katrina was a controversial disaster. Did the race (often African American) and class (often lower) of the parishes correspond to the delay in rescue response and federal aid? Could a large part of the disaster have been avoided had the levees and floodgates been properly maintained? Echoes of mismanagement reverberated for months after Katrina made landfall. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, many never to return, and to this day, a decade later, parts of the city are still recovering.

Shortly after hurricane Katrina in 2006, *The New Yorker* commissioned Polidori to photograph the devastation wrought on New Orleans.[48] The subsequent Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit, "After the Flood" – twenty-four chromogenic prints, each measuring three by five feet – became the most visited photography exhibit in Met history, at that time. "After the Flood" contained only a few dozen photos, well short of

[48]Polidori used a 5x7 camera that required exposures between thirty seconds and four minutes.

the three hundred plus pages of photographs in the eponymously titled Steidl book that was published not long thereafter.[49]

Jeff Rosenheim, the author of the introduction to *After the Flood*, writes that the project, "an unflinching survey of widespread urban ruin," functions as a "meditation on our culture in decline," even while he recognizes that some regard the project as "a rather vulgar act of crime-scene rubbernecking."[50] New Orleans, Rosenheim suggests, "needs the rest of the country to bear witness to the stunning scope of its devastation."[51] According to Rosenheim, Polidori's images are successful because "Polidori eschewed nostalgia for something far more complex—the poignancy of absence."[52] Finally, the introduction to the work concludes with the suggestion that what Polidori is really up to in this project is giving voice to those affected by the "idle negligence" of political agents (and Army Corps of Engineers) that caused so much damage and left so many New Orleans residents without help for too long. Rosenheim compares Polidori's project to Walker Evans' FSA photographs from the Great Depression and suggests that the many images of abandon serve to "ensure that these citizens and the city itself will not be abandoned or forgotten."[53] At the same time, Rosenheim states that both he and Polidori hope that *After the Flood* "will promote a serious discussion about environmental protection and the effects of global climate change, national emergency planning and response, about the essential role of the camera in modern society, and what it really

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[49]Robert Polidori, *After the Flood* (Gottinger, Germany, Steidl, 2006).
[50]Jeff L. Rosenheim, "Do you know what it means…," in *After the Flood* (Gottinger, Germany, Steidl, 2006), 11. Others might use the term ruin porn.
[51]Rosenheim, 11.
[52]Ibid.
[53]Ibid.

means to be united as a people."[54] Optimistic goals indeed. A portion of the book's profits were donated to organizations working to rebuild and revivify New Orleans.

Polidori was first sent to New Orleans on assignment, but he soon found a personal project there as well. The resultant body of work and book are a dirge to the city and those that lost everything, some including their lives.[55]

Polidori in New Orleans

After the Flood begins with a diptych taken from St. Claude Avenue bridge. Four white homes are in view, all with what appear to be three feet of water surrounding them. Two cars are up to the bumper in water. On or near the doors of the homes is a large florescent X that separates information into four quadrants, including which unit surveyed the scene and how many dead were found. Most all of the exteriors in the book have this X somewhere on the front of the house. It's a constant reminder of both death and abandonment.



Figure 14. "View from St. Claude Avenue bridge."[56]

[54]Rosenheim, 11.
[55]Polidori explained in 2007: "Now, New Orleans, that's the most depressing one. That whole book I did is a dirge. (…) I think of each of those interior photos as a funerary image. It's paying your last respects. All those home are going to be demolished or burned, and you'll never have any other traces of any of it but through photographs." See BOMB: Artists in Conversation.

The book is a massive 330 pages. Polidori photographs displaced cars, leaning utility poles, pools of water where water shouldn't be, streets that look more like canals, downed trees, ravaged store fronts, neighborhood streets, interiors of homes, FEMA trailers, and debris. Most of the places are domestic in nature; only a handful of the images are of storefronts – an abandoned hotel, a tall office building, a hair salon, a laundromat, a barber shop, a television repair shop, a Winn Dixie, a Walmart, most of which are photographed from the outside. Apart from the occasional helicopter in the distance, there is no evidence that any humans are in the area. Polidori's images are always decidedly organized, whether they are exteriors or interiors. However, just like his previous projects, the interior images, his "rooms," are where he's in his sweet spot.

Especially for editorial photographs, it's often considered best to choose one photograph from a given scene, rather than several from different angles. Just find the best one about each subject. Polidori takes the opposite approach, especially with his interior shots. In each of the homes he photographs – he names them by their street address – Polidori photographs from several angles, shooting from the kitchen into the living room, then from the living room back into the kitchen. He moves around each place with his camera. It's part pensive study, part forensic collection of evidence.

The value of this approach is that the viewer experiences the components of each room from several different angles, placing each object in context and progressively providing more information. One image gives clues that it's a continuation from the previous, and in your mind you're piecing together how each place is laid out as you visually walk through the space. This approach is done most expertly in his images of 5417 Marigny Street.

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[56]Robert Polidori, *After the Flood*, 4-5.



Figure 15. "5417 Marigny Street."[57]

Polidori's images are often obsessively rectilinear with a balance that often emphasizes a central point. Many of his images contain a way out, so to speak; there's an open door or window or trail of light providing egress. These open spaces also function as invitations to continue exploring each space, each small sequence of photographs. We want to know what to know the condition of the peach room in the distance, and Polidori provides us the path for how to get there.

The color and contents of each interior space indicate something about the age of the home and the age of its inhabitants. Palettes and patterns indicative of the 1960s and 1970s abound – light blues, peaches, yellows. These colors are often in stark contrasts with overall patina of dried mud, dirt, and general filth.

[57]Polidori, *After the Flood*, 48.

Age – or time – is a strong theme throughout the work – the age of the home, the length of time a particular place has been abandoned, the presence of visible mold, often in dense collections and striking patterns, to the extent of blending in with the decoration of the room itself. In the kitchen at 5417 Marigny Street, for instance, the peaches of painted on the lower quarter of the above cabinets is mostly camouflaged by the present of mold and mildew.



Figure 16. "5417 Marigny Street."[58]

Polidori identifies this project, in part, as political speech, so it's little surprise to find images that contain written messages directed, it seems, to both the photographer and his eventual audience, e.g., "Tourism here is profane." There are other subtle messages throughout the images, none of which are humorous. In one home a sign reads "Southern Comfort" amidst a room completely destroyed. In another home, religious

[58]Polidori, *After the Flood*, 49.

imagery and signage serve as eerie puns: “God is the wind beneath your wings.” In the image above a rainbow flag or curtain, a now common symbol of the gay rights movement, covers a window – the rainbow, the sign God gave to the biblical family of Noah after the flood as a promise that he’d never again destroy by flood. In this image, 5417 Marigny Street, it serves as a haunting reminder of Katrina’s indiscriminant destruction and the seeming betrayal of God’s supposed centuries-old promise.

Polidori’s images are large enough and detailed enough to be able to read the words of a prayer on the wall in the background of an image. If we study closely, we can learn quite a bit from each image. For instance, at 5000 Cartier Avenue, music is important, as is evidenced by both the overturned piano and stalwart organ as well as the overturned basket of records. We presume there are little ones in the family, given the small rocking chair in the foreground. The family photograph of three children, leaning precariously on the top of the organ appears dated. Are we in an empty nest? Is the little girl in that image now the service woman in the portrait sitting atop the record collection? And we presume that the inhabitants are Roman Catholic, given the iconography on the walls. Is this a room of sing-alongs? Is this a room of family gathering? And if this is an empty nest, did mom and dad make it out alive?



Figure 17. "5000 Cartier Avenue."[59]

When considering where his subjectivity would linger after his own death, he remarked that it would be in the collection of material possessions that are spread about his home and office. It's the sort of material subjectivity that drew Polidori to those three apartments back in the 1908s. And it's the contents of these homes.

[59]Polidori, *After the Flood*, 70.



Figure 18. "Industrial canal breach, Reynes Street."[60]

Polidori and Place

Polidori is a photographer with an obvious respect for place. Recall that his career as a still photographer is traced to "portraits" of three New York City apartments, abandoned by their recently deceased occupants. In his Katrina photos, there is the sense that the reason Polidori is photographing homes is because what he really cares about are the people displaced. In making portraits of these homes and these neighborhoods, he's bearing witness to the devastation wrought on those that used to live there. In most all cases, Polidori's depiction of home is heartbreaking, but it is heartbreaking because it places such a high value on the unadulterated version of home, the version pre-hurricane.

[60]Polidori, *After the Flood*, 12.

Polidori assumes that to best show how a calamity affects the most intimate place a person can have, their home, you needn't show crying eyes, drained bank accounts, or stray dogs. Polidori's audience immediately grasps the weight of these images by the way in which Katrina robbed these people of their most sacred space. Polidori assumes that to best show how Katrina affects a person, show them their home. At the same time, by intentionally eschewing all human figures, Polidori implicitly asks us to place them in the frame, to consider them. By excluding them from the photos, he asks us to include them in our thoughts.



Figure 19. "5323 St. Anthony Avenue."[61]

Tuan describes topophilia as the affective bond between people and the material world. That's *not* what Polidori is doing when he steps foot into a stranger's home and sets up his camera; Polidori's project is not about his own experience with the places he

[61]Polidori, *After the Flood*, 77.

photographed. Rather, it is an attempt at photographing topophilia itself, or perhaps it's the threat of its loss. Or maybe it's the mourning of its destruction. He is motivated by ethical ambitions to bear witness and expose the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, but that motivation is fueled by concern for those most affected. So he turns to the place most important to them, their homes.

Polidori's images and the feelings we experience in viewing them are a special kind of affect that would not be felt if the images of post-Katrina were all of commercial or industrial interiors; this is why so few images in the book are. By taking us into the homes of those most affected, Polidori forces us to confront the full devastation, asks us to imagine our own home destroyed, invites us to consider each person's upheaval.

Home, recall, is both the foundation and apotheosis of Tuan's understanding of place; place is meaningful space and the most meaningful is our home. To understand the photography of place, one must understand the photography of the home. Thus, one must understanding the great value and meaning of home, both as a concept – that is as comfort, security, familiarity, intimacy, and identity – and as the physical structure that can be left devastatingly uninhabitable in a matter of minutes.

Tuan and Polidori both place great emphasis on the home, Tuan throughout his career, Polidori very specifically in his *After the Flood*. However, the way they conceive of home is not identical. Tuan's emphasis is overwhelmingly on the value of place; place and home carry positive connotations in his work, even while Tuan would readily admit that there are significant places that have negative meanings. Polidori's emphasis is overwhelming place-as-destruction. Throughout Polidori's career his images suggest a former (or future) fullness of meaning through images that coldly portray place as scenes

of ruin.

Throughout Tuan's career, home is the apotheosis of place. Throughout *After the Flood*, home is an idea out of reach, a place destroyed, a concept that is past tense in the images he portrays. Polidori's understanding of home is volatile. Home is broken; home was but now isn't. Polidori elucidates Tuan's claim that the tchotchkes and décor items in a home contribute to a home's value – our pictures, memorabilia, furniture, the overall arrangement, etc. At the same time, there is no apotheosis of place in Polidori's homes. It's quite the opposite.

In that sense, home doesn't exist in Polidori's work. Insofar as he incessantly, perhaps pathologically, insists on images of domestic ruin, he makes a claim that there is no such thing as home. To be clear, Polidori's *After the Flood* has a sum total of zero images of home. They are all former-homes or to-be homes. *After the Flood* is a project about homelessness as much as it is about the significance of home. As such it's as much a critique of Tuan's often optimistic view of home as it is a compliment to it. Tuan and Polidori's view of home together is a more thorough treatment of the subject.



Figure 20. "6524 Wuerpel Street."[62]

Most of Polidori's images carry heavy traces of transition. As a viewer you are constantly encountering scenes that aren't settled. Something is in the wrong place. Debris is everywhere. The images anticipate the reconciliation of the scenes therein. As such, Polidori's images ask us to consider a middle space between space and place. As Polidori pays his final respects to these places, it is unclear what will happen when he leaves. Will the inhabitants of this home return, clean up, and start over? Is this home lost; will it be razed? Or, will these domestic ruins be left for the earth to slowly consume? Polidori's images appear to be post-place as their value is evaporating, decomposing, or otherwise in exile, as it were. Places require people and their values, and there simply are no people in Polidori's images. Will they ever return?

[62]Polidori, *After the Flood*, 329.

Polidori and Porn

In the spring of 2015, Polidori had an exhibition at Camera Work to show off never-before-seen images from his Versailles series and a handful of photographs made in Cuba and the US. While there, he was interviewed by the weekly online magazine, *The Talks*. Straight out of the gate, the interviewer asks Polidori, "Do you find misery beautiful?" Polidori replies rather tersely, "I'm upfront about it: matter decays. Time goes on. (…) Everyone will age."[63] "But some people think it's sinful to see beauty in that," he adds, noting that what many other people, even his critics, find beautiful, he simply does not."[64] For Polidori, death and ruin are matters of fact; avoiding pathos (his term) is simply ignoring reality. Then, clearly responding to critics who have associated Polidori's work with ruin photography in general, he states, "Insulting to me is this term that's used, 'ruin porn.' I guess by 'pornography' they mean an unbridled, sinful, frolicking in destruction."[65] When asked to clarify his position Polidori adds, "My photos are physical graphic records. A lot of the places I've photographed simply won't exist."[66] Polidori defines the nature of photography as collective memory, "the physical world revealing its own self."[67] He contends that he is not an abstract artist; he's a straight photographer, "addressing phenomena in the real world."[68] To sustain this argument, he identifies abstract art as a lesser art (than what he calls "iconographical art"), because abstract art is nothing more than "decorative."[69] Polidori photographs with his audience in mind and wants his images to be influential on his audience's behavior.

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[63]The Talks. "Robert Polidori: Why Is There a Line?," accessed July 14, 2015. http://the-talks.com/interviews/robert-polidori/.
[64]Ibid.
[65]Ibid.
[66]Ibid.
[67]Ibid.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Ibid.

Alluding to the original question about ruin porn, he adds, "the purpose of my images is not to seduce someone."[70]

Polidori's interviewer leans in on the subject of photographic "vulturism" putting Polidori's images, especially the image he made of a dead woman found in her bed after Katrina, in the same conversation with Kevin Carter's starving toddler. Polidori unloads:

> Give me a break. It's all this kind of false morality stuff. I shoot a lot of places in slums in India and in Brazil and people say, "Oh, this is a kind of voyeurism, why aren't you helping them?" What am I supposed to help those people with? I'm going to teach them to use large format cameras? That's not going to help them in their life at all. I'm supposed to go and be some sort of missionary? No. To me, that's an arrogant thing. I try to treat them with respect and dignity. I get their permission, and I try to not change their life at all. And I think this is the morally correct stance, and the politically correct stance to take.[71]

His idea of false morality is compelling. It suggests that the fetishization claim that accompanies most ruin porn critiques is, in fact, an arrogant display of feigned superiority born out of overzealous political correctness. By this, does Polidori himself claim a moral superiority over those who would accuse him of exploiting scenes of trauma?

Polidori makes a living (and probably a good one) by selling images of others' devastation. He is convinced that doing so is a testimony to those directly affected by the scenes he photographs. Polidori won't stand for the idea that because he is a witness to devastation he should be held personally responsible for contributing on-the-ground change and should, in fact, grab a shovel and get to work, so to speak. Throughout his career, Polidori has been consistent – he sees his images as the most on-the-ground he could possibly be, given his trade and his notoriety. What Polidori knows best how to do is to photograph; plus, he has the stage of publications such as *The New Yorker* and

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[70]The Talks.
[71]Ibid.

public displays such as national museums; were he to affect any real change would it not be prudent to attempt to do so through these mediums?

Polidori has literally made a living off of scenes of human trauma. Consistency matched with conviction can give the impression of authenticity; Polidori consistently shoots the same subject matter and professes the same ethical conviction throughout. However, his voluminous account of post-Katrina New Orleans – recall the book is 300 pages of photographs – could be a sign of pathology too; the exhaustiveness of his work and the consistency of his professed conviction do not exonerate the photographer from moral charges. Polidori's response – What do you want me to do, pick up a shovel? – might best be countered with: No, just don't pick up a camera. Polidori presumes that his response to human devastation should be to photograph it and that anything in additional is asking too much. A fair challenge in return would be to ask why he should photograph it in the first place, even as his "I must give witness" reply is expected.[72]

The question of what to do in the face of disaster is an interesting and complex prompt. Some people choose to ignore the news, slide it under the rug of moral disaffectedness. Some feel the prick of empathy and choose to offer help, either in monetary donations or with their time and actionable skills. Some feel morally superior for helping. Some feel ashamed for not helping. Polidori responds to trauma and large-scale disaster by looking at it, studying it, and reproducing it for others to consume.

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[72]There are, of course, many different ways to photograph a scene of destruction, Polidori's being a particular sort. Many Katrina-related photography projects emerged in the days (and years) following Katrina. Some are journalistic, like the photographs taken by senior staff photographer for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, Ted Jackson. Some are more perspectival, like Richard Misrach's *Destroy this Memory*. See The Times-Picayune, *Katrina: The Ruin and Recovery of New Orleans* (London: Spotlight Press, 2006); see also Richard Misrach, *Destroy this Memory* (New York: Aperture, 2010).

As is the case with ruin porn, the question isn't so much what is in the frame, though that is significant, but *why* the contents of the image are given significance and *how* they are later consumed. It may very well be that Polidori's work, in his shirking of moral culpability and his exhaustive reproduction of human trauma through the photography of ruins may actually be ruin porn *par excellence.*

Perhaps it comes down to an ethical understanding of viewing. Is viewing a traumatic scene ethical? Is taking pleasure in viewing a traumatic scene ethical? Is making beautiful photographs of a traumatic scene ethical? To raise the stakes further, what of witnessing; what is the contribution a photographer makes by witnessing (then making permanent through reproduction) a traumatic scene? Does the photographer make real (and contextual) what has been merely reported, or does the photographer make visceral and fetishizable what has been already felt in great depth? And for each of these questions, who is in the position to decided for each photographer, photograph, and scene; who is able to pass that judgment? For each of these questions about ruin photography, the questions seem to repeatedly point to intention, context, and interpretation.

Conclusion

Reading Tuan's humanist geography in tangent with Polidori's images of New Orleans is an exercise in trying to better understand the mindful photography of place (as the opposite of what has been called *ruin porn*). Polidori may have never read, much less heard of, Yi-Fu Tuan, but he and Tuan share an attraction to place, to the intimate experience of home, and to the relationship between identity and the material objects

used to adorn our homes. Polidori never uses the word ‘topophilia’ but insofar as he claims to make ‘portraits’ of intimate spaces, topophilia is top of mind.

When we see a home destroyed we feel the full weight of place, how significant home is to our daily lives and how the disruption of that space is intimately devastating. Idyllic images of home cannot give us this appreciation, not in the same way that the disruption and devastation of that place can, even when we are strangers in relation. While Polidori is a stranger in every home he photographs, his attention to detail and composition invite us, his viewers, to see as much of the context of each home and room as possible. We can only see the surface of these rooms, just as we can only see the surface of any photograph. However, given the psychological and symbolic weight of the scene, we know what feelings to infer. The surface, in this case, is sometimes more than we can handle. Whether we enjoy that sensation is a different topic altogether.










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Chapter 4

Ruin Porn

Relevance of the Topic

In the spring of 2009, when I began photographing Briarcliff it was a fit. By this I mean that it felt like I belonged there. I felt inspired and grounded in a setting that most closely replicated what I imagine a warzone might look like – windows blown out, ceiling tiles fallen and shattered, mold everywhere, signs of trespass, plant life growing where no plant life was intended. I was in awe, really. What is this place? What happened here? And am I going to get in trouble for being here?

During the first few hours at Briarcliff I shot about six rolls of film. I only left that day because I ran out of film. I had never been so inspired by a place. I had never been so dialed-in. Eventually, I developed those rolls of film, printed them, and showed them in two exhibitions. I received great feedback, but even then I knew that the praise was more for the discovery of this place than it was for the skill of my photographic eye. When they complimented me for my pictures of Briarcliff, it was Briarcliff they were complimenting, not necessarily me. Like a remarkable sunset, a raindrop through a macro lens, or the celebrity-of-the-moment on a red carpet, my images of Briarcliff were successful – that is, well received – in large part because of the subject matter, the referent, the place itself. Something about those ruins, that dilapidated space, was attractive to almost anyone who would look at them.

In a 1982 PBS interview with Bill Moyers, street photographer Gary Winogrand explained the tension between the drama of a scene in the world and the drama of that scene represented as a photograph. Speaking of a parade participant, Winogrand

commented, "That guy in the car, sitting on a back seat, waving at the crowd—to make a photograph more theatrical than the subject's own theatricality is a hell of a problem."[1] Winogrand's vision was one that seemed to translate the seemingly ordinary into dramatic scenes, creating images that give the viewer what feels like an invitation into an actual scene, unadulterated (by the camera). Winogrand recognized that an image is theatrical in itself, and when a scene is also theatrical, there may be tension between the theatricality of the scene and the theatricality of the photograph of the scene.

An over abundance of produced theatricality will quell the illusion viewers may sense that they are first-hand witnesses. Instead of witnessing the street scene, they will witness a photograph (of the street scene) and the photographer who created it. Too much production, too much theatricality equals the awareness by the viewer of the mediating steps intended to stimulate the viewer, and in doing so, with the curtain pulled back, the image can lose its immediacy. This production can feel heavy-handed by the viewer, an overbearing presence of (and by) the photographer.

I've always experienced such photographs as unnecessary impositions by the photographer that actually diminish the image. It's too much photographer, not enough photograph. Whether arrogance, enthusiasm, insecurity, or ignorance encourages the photographer to play such a heavy hand, most all photographers fall victim to this at some point, self included. Sometimes the theatricality of the scene is enough and the photographer needs to get out of the way. Sometimes getting out of the way is one of the most important skills of a photographer.

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[1]"Garry Winogrand with Bill Moyers, 1982," 2point8, March 23, 2007, accessed April 4, 2015. http://2point8.whileseated.org/2007/03/23/garry-winogrand-with-bill-moyers/.

My images of Briarcliff were successful because viewers appreciated the theatricality of the scenes I photographed. Yes, of course, I had a vision and command of skill, but the story and textures of Briarcliff possess their own tiny theaters to which people respond. And while it's not a perfect criticism, my photographs were well received, in large part, because they were heightened scenes of drama. The theatricality, to use Winogrand's term, of Briarcliff is effusive at times. Like Arbus's freaks or Adams' "El Capitain" the photographs succeed, in part, because the scene being photographed carries such aesthetic or curious weight that it overpowers the viewing, moving any technical skill of the photographer to the side.

I was challenged: Your photographs are working because they are easy photographs – easy because there's a warzone in front of your camera; any skilled photographer could make these photographs. Anyone could explain this scene. This scene, this place, is what ultimately makes these photographs successful, not you.

This realization changed the way I think about photography. While I'm still a sucker for sunsets, foggy valleys, and dewdrops, I've been working over the past few years to make (what are to me) more compelling (and challenging) images out of scenes that wouldn't necessarily be considered traditionally attractive. That's become my new challenge as a photographer – to make beautiful or interesting that which doesn't appear so at first blush. Over the years that I photographed Briarcliff, the way I photographed changed as I grew as a photographer and tried to think of new ways to represent that place.

My fascination with Briarcliff's ruins introduced me to a general cultural fascination with ruins photography. The contemporary West's most recent fascination

with ruins photography came to somewhat of a peak with two publications in 2010, Andrew Moore's *Detroit Disassembled* and Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre's *Ruins of Detroit*, works designated for gallery walls and coffee tables. These projects became two of the most popular bodies of work in the 21st century that deal with post-industrial ruins in America. Both works explore the abandoned buildings of a blighted Detroit and produce, with great clarity and color, the dilapidated condition of Detroit's ruins. Critics were split – these were either beautifully constructed images of a moment in American history *or* they were exploitative fetishes of what has been popularly referred to as "ruin porn." (More on that moniker momentarily.)

Those two books projects were successful because of a cultural fascination with ruins. Why do we like to look at ruins? The question emerges out of a curiosity about why ruins are interesting to us – what they represent, how they make us feel, and what about this moment in history has made images of ruins both popular and appealing. Why do we like to look at photographs of ruins? That's the question that I hope to address. As a way of offering some possible answers, I proceed by defining ruin, tracing its history of appreciation in the West, defining "ruin porn," and offering a handful of possibilities for why we take pleasure in viewing ruins.

Interdisciplinary Scholarship and the moment

In their 2012 *Progress in Human Geography* article, "Reckoning with Ruins," Caitline DeSilvey and Tim Edensor note that at the turn of the 21st century, there was a general paucity of scholarship regarding contemporary ruins. Since the year 2000, though, there is now "an extraordinary intensification of academic and popular interest in

the ruins of the recent past and associated realms of dereliction."[2] In that time, a number of research areas have broached the topic: geography, philosophy, semiotics, sociology, psychology, and art, among many more. Ruins scholarship – ruinology – is an interdisciplinary field that combines a wide array of specialties, all of which seem to have been piqued in the past fifteen years. Why is that; why are ruins interesting to us; why now?

For the moment, I take as a given that the allure of ruins is a recurring phenomenon in Western culture – the question isn't *if* but *why*. In the past few decades in particular there has been a resurgence of interest in ruins, especially the photography of ruins. There is no conclusive answer to why that is, but I propose several factors that I believe contribute to the current period of "ruin lust."

9/11, Great Recession, Detroit, Capitalism

While it may be true that he 21st Century has had its fair share of tragic events, the past fifteen years are unique in that they are more visual—regarding photographic images and mass media—than any other century before. Western culture has become inured to both the news and imagery of mass devastation and destruction.

With very few and unique exceptions, every living American adult has in their mind an image of the Twin Towers crashing into ruin on September 11, 2001. The images are not all the same, not all perfectly accurate, but we all have them. No other cultural event of the past twenty years can claim such ubiquity. In fact, ruins scholar Michel Markarius suggests that our "national conscience was without images of the ruin

[2]Caitlin DeSlivey, and Tim Edensor, "Reckoning with Ruins," *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 4 (August 2013): 465.

until September 11, 2001."[3] Every living American adult possesses an image of ruin that avails itself to an understanding of what it means to be an American. It's not part of my research to make a causal connection between 9/11 imagery and our voracious appetite for ruin imagery. I simply note that there is a direct correlation between the contemporary period of ruin lust and the greatest ruin to ever appear on American soil.

"The destruction of the world's most famous symbolic icon of capitalist modernity on 9/11," writes Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, "brought to a climax the debate about the ways in which modernity, broadly conceived, seems to have invented, framed, and produced ruins."[4] Svetlana Boym, scholar of architecture, comparative literature, and the "off-modern," echoes Hell and Schönle, stating, "the ruins of modernity question the making of such a world picture, offering us a new kind of radical perspectivism."[5] The events of September 11, 2001, accentuated known arguments about the broken promise of modernity.[6] Today, it is commonplace within ruins scholarship for the ruin to be an emblem of the failure of both late capitalism and the (promises of the) modern project. My conjecture is that this heightened criticism of modernity and the insurgent ruinophilia of the 21st century are due, in part, to the events of 9/11.

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[3]Michel Markarius*, Ruins* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 236.
[4]Julia Hell, and Andreas Schönle, "Introduction," in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 5.
[5]Svetlana Boym, "Ruins of the Avant-Garde," in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. Andreas Schonle and Julia Hell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 59.
[6]"By modernity, I mean the gradual, uneven, and unintended historical shift in social organization, material circumstances, communal values, behavioral patterns, and individual character that began in Renaissance Europe, intensified in Enlightenment Europe, and was most intensely realized in late in (sic) nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and North American culture. Modernity si characterized by secularization, mobility, nationalism, urbanization, industrialization, technological and scientific development, capitalism, literacy, egalitarianism, democracy, individualism, and the imperative for social change rather than stability." (See Rosemary Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 200, Ch. 3, n. 2.)

The Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009) was the worst economic down-turn since World War II. Caused by lax governmental oversight and risky economic products, virtually everyone felt the effects of the Recession. The Recession was caused, in large part, by the sub-prime lending practices.[7] It was a time in which many people lost their homes and the disparity between the haves and have-nots came center stage with the deleterious consequences of late capitalism in the spotlight. The effects of the Great Recession were visualized, for the rest of the world, through images of blight, and more often than not, the setting of those images was Detroit. Writing in 2011, Brian Dillon observed, "At the close of the last decade, economic ruin led to a rash of images of architectural and urban-planning disaster — housing developments that would never be inhabited, office blocks that could not be completed — and a renewed awareness of the long decline of major industrial sites and cities of the last century: the plight of Detroit become the prime example. In general, a sense of the waning of the modernity and modernism of the twentieth century was in the air."[8] The imagery of the Recession was virtually synonymous with imagery of a blighted Detroit.

In fact, the Recession was more like an exclamation point on the end of a half-century of trouble for Detroit. Detroit was once the third-largest city in America, but in the 1950s the Big Three automotive companies began leaving Detroit.[9] *The* industry that undergirded the economy of Detroit for the first half of the 20th century looked elsewhere for lower wages, better taxes, and automation. "The factories that had once churned out

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[7]See *Inside Job*, directed by Charles Ferguson, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2011.
[8]Brian Dillon, "Introduction: A Short History of Decay," in *Ruins: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011), 10.
[9]See Thomas J. Sugure, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

flashy new cars—shiny totems of the American dream—were now empty and decaying," writes Jonathan Mahler.[10] Detroit, what some have dubbed *the* modern city, lost two-thirds of its population and more than half of its properties.[11] The slow evaporation of industry jobs, white flight, the 1967 riots, and federal and local governmental negligence came *before* the Recession. Up to that point, photographers had been documenting the post-mortem landscape of Detroit, but through the Recession, Detroit became *the* place to photograph.

The success of two aforementioned photobooks about the ruins of Detroit, Marchand and and Meffre's *Ruins of Detroit* (2010) and Moore's *Detroit Disassembled* (2010) capitalized upon and became the public faces of the trend to photograph the ruins of Detroit. These sorts of images have "become such a dominant visual path for artists depicting the city that an entire genre has arisen: Detroit ruin porn."[12] Ruin porn – provisionally, what we might call the fetishization of ruins through photographs devoid of context – was around before it ascended on Detroit, but once it did, it came with such visual persistence and digital virality that one could say "ruin has become Detroit's brand."[13]

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[10]Jonathan Mahler, "Remains to Be Seen," review of *Detroit City is the Place to Be*, by Mark Binelli, *New York Times*, December 21, 2012, Sunday Book Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/books/review/detroit-city-is-the-place-to-be-by-mark-binelli.html.

[11]*The New York Times Magazine* reports that "Of Detroit's 380,000 properties, some 114,000 have been razed, with 80,000 more considered blighted and most likely in need of demolition." See Ben Austen, "The Post-Post-Apocalyptic Detroit, *The New York Times Magazine* (July 11, 2014), accessed July 11, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/13/magazine/the-post-post-apocalyptic-detroit.html.

[12]Kyle Chayka, "Detroit Ruin Porn and the Fetish of Decay," *Hyperallergic*, January 13, 2011, accessed April 15, 2015. http://hyperallergic.com/16596/detroit-ruin-porn/.

[13]Chayka. George Steinmetz adds, "Detroit is the the largest modern US city in ruins. It is the only American city regularly described as a 'ruin' in the mainstream media and probably the only one that markets its own ruination to Hollywood as a backdrop for dystopian science fiction fantasies and gritty crime films." See George Steinmetz, "Detroit: A Tale of Two Cities," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2009, 27: 762.

Photographs of Detroit's ruins became a successful style of photography, in part, because it capitalized on an underlying pessimism of capitalism. Ruin porn became evidence of capitalism's deleterious consequences.

> Paradoxically, the ruin emerges through this process as a symbol of both failure (of local industry) and of growth (elsewhere, usually overseas). Scholars exploring these processes draw on the notion of 'creative destruction'—through which capitalism organizes the destruction and reconfiguring of economic orders to clear the way for the creation of new wealth.[14]

The success of ruin porn is in part the success of the critiques of capitalism. Said differently, ruin porn rode the wave of and helped to illustrate the deleterious consequences of capitalism.

The ruin is an index of "both the hope and hubris of the futures that never came to pass."[15] Those two words – hope and hubris – are significant here as both have a forward looking mentality in which one is openly optimistic while the other is expectantly and confidently optimistic. For many critics and consumers of ruin porn, images of ruins visualize "the warning of imperial hubris," exposing "the decay of what was the twentieth century's commanding vision of the future."[16] Viewed in this way, ruins become warnings of capitalism's flawed ambitions and potentially doomed future. In part, we are attracted to ruin porn, because we are obsessed with concerns about our cultures future, and these images show us what could be, for as Christopher Woodward suggests, "if such a colossus as Rome can crumble" and if prominent American cities can practically disappear (viz Detroit), then why not San Francisco, New York, or Atlanta?[17]

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[14]DeSilvey and Edensor, 468
[15]Ibid.
[16]Elizabeth Blackmar, "Modernist Ruins," *American Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (June 2001): 325. Andreas Huyssen, "Authentic Ruins," in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 54.
[17]Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins: A Journey Through History, Art, and Literature* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 5.

The period between 9/11 and the Great Recession was a calamitous time: the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the mass shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007, and the great earthquake in Haiti in 2010, to name a few major events.[18] All of these calamities were witnessed (and recycled) through the multitude of visual media we encounter on a daily basis. My point is *not* that these events created a craving for images of dereliction and destruction, though that may be true. My point is that these images were daily occurrences for the average American in our increasingly visual culture. These calamities are not the reason we are in love with images of ruins; they are the events that brought images of ruins to the fore of Western consciousness.

Defining "Ruin"

The etymological core of "ruin" is the idea of destruction, collapse, or downfall.[19] It may be pedantic to mention, but the idea of ruin, in most all situations, refers to an original height from which something fell, either literally or metaphorically. The idea of a ruin is an idea about the original unblemished whole, the fallen or disintegrated components that fell, the remaining structure, or the act of material reduction. That is, the word "ruin" possesses referents to the past and the absent, and it encourages the tacit imagination of the former and the whole. Ruins are, by default, structures that only exist in deference; they point elsewhere. At its etymological core, the ruin is a semiotic structure.

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[18]Of course, it could be argued that this period was on global scale just as calamitous is any other period. But it just so happens that this is the period in which the love of ruins re-emerged in Western consciousness.

[19]OED Online, s.v. "ruin, n.," accessed May 14, 2015. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/168689?rskey=MOMq4k&result=1.

There are a variety of ways ruinologists define ruins: "the forensic remains of an event," "the unexpected persistence of damaged materiality in the present," "that which has stuck around for longer than necessary—or at least longer than expected," "survivors," "the slow decomposition of spatial form in time" and that which is "posed between wholeness and complete dissolution."[20] These formulations help to paint the different aspects of a ruin: how it became a ruin, the sometimes inexplicable longevity of its construction, the significance of purpose and use, and the display of time and time's passing.

As it concerns the current study, it's important to paint a clear picture of what I mean when I speak about ruins, especially as it concerns "ruin porn." In this study, ruins are entropic remnants from the built environment. They are typically post-industrial and atypically domestic in nature, though homes or apartment buildings do fall into the spectrum. Ruins in this study are contemporary remains of buildings that were typically constructed in the 20th century, often at the height of industrial expansion. They are commonly the sites of former factories, schools, orphanages, hospitals, mental health facilities, libraries, and various government, commercial, or institutional facilities. They are all modern buildings. Theme parks also persist in this genre.

What all of these places have in common is that: they are abandoned or mostly abandoned; they no longer function as they were built to function; they are abandoned; they are in a state of damage, dereliction, or decay, even to the point of near

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[20]See, respectively: Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncann*y (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2013), 268; Geoff Manaugh, "Introduction: The Survivals," in *Modern Ruins: Portraits of Place in Mid-Atlantic Region*, ed. Shaun O'Boyle (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), viii-ix; John Cunningham, "Boredom in the Charnel House Theses on 'Post Industrial' Ruins," *Variant* 42, accessed May 5, 2015. http://www.variant.org.uk/42texts/CharnelHouse.html; and Stephen Cairns and Jane M. Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), 170.

unrecognizability (as a built structure); they are overrun to some degree by encroaching plant and animal life; they are typically owned (so not unclaimed real estate) but unoccupied and loosely policed, often with large chain-link fences and security patrols.[21] Ruins can be as minimal as a slab of concrete, as extensive as an entire city.



Figure 21. Andrew Moore, "Birches Growing in Books, Detroit."[22]

Equally as important as a definition of what a ruin is, is a definition of what it is not. There are, of course, ancient ruins – the Acropolis, the contents of museum archives – but this study does not treat the ruins form other societies or civilizations. Significant

[21]In his online catalogue of British ruins, Tim Edensor, names the following categories of images: creatures, juxtapositions, sculptures, nature, order, stages, text, textures, things, traces, uses. See Tim Edensor - British Industrial Ruins, "Introduction," accessed May 14, 2015. http://www.sci-eng.mmu.ac.uk/british_industrial_ruins/default.asp.

[22]Andrew Moore, "Birches Growing in Books, Detroit," accessed May 14, 2015. http://www.andrewlmoore.com/photography/detroit/birches-growing-in-books-detroit-2/. This is a quintessential ruin porn image. The space is institutional (a library), nature is reclaiming territory, graffiti is prevalent, and a general sense of disarray and dereliction characterizes the image.

here are post-industrial ruins that are specific to the West and specific to the 20th century. There are memorials from the past century that one might consider ruins, but an important distinction between ruins and memorials is that memorials are erected (or maintained) to remember while ruins persist despite being forgotten. Said differently, memorials are constructed (and maintained) to remember; ruins are forgotten constructions. I suppose there are ruined memorials, but that is not within the scope of this study. There are also abandoned building projects and designated plots of building materials assembled for future construction, what Robert Smithson might collectively call "ruins in reverse."[23] And finally, there are repurposed buildings, such as a loft apartments formed out of an old mill or repurposed factory. Repurposed buildings do not qualify as ruins on account of their current use.[24]

This definition of ruins is reliant upon the larger question: Why do we like to look at ruin porn? So it's fair to say that the above definition of ruins is a way of introducing ruin porn: When we talk about ruin porn, this is the type of ruin we're talking about.

Defining "Ruin Porn"

In a 2009 *Vice* article, "Something, Something, Something Detroit," writer Thomas Mortan addressed the over-production of journalism about Detroit, especially coverage of Detroit's so-called ruins. "After suffering through the nation's worst and most concentrated examples of racial violence, industrial collapse, serial arson, crack war, and municipal bankruptcy following years of municipal kleptocracy," Mortan

[23]See Robert Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic," *Artforum*, December 1967.
[24]I do not identify the following as might also consider forensic photos, photos of only natural elements, war or conflict photos, natural disaster photos, or crime and terror photos to be ruins photos. There may be merit to those arguments, but these types of photographs are not a part of this study.

writes, "Detroit is being descended on by a plague of reporters."[25] Like a feeding frenzy, these reporters swoop into Detroit, spend a few hours on the ground, get a few key interviews, snap a few shots of a post-apocalyptic Detroit, then they fly back to their respective major cities, post the story, and watch website traffic break records. In fact, when the UK version of *Vice* ran a series of photographs by Detroit photographer James Griffioen on an abandoned Detroit public school, the entire site's traffic tripled for almost a week after its publication.[26]

In what might be described as meta-journalism, Mortan himself flew to Detroit in 2009 to meet Griffioen and learn more about this "influx of reporters who don't want anything to do with the city but feel compelled by the time to get a Detroit story under their belts, like it's the journalistic version of cutting a grunge record."[27] Actually, it's probably better to refer to that period as an influx of photographers. Everywhere one turned in the popular media, you could find images of Detroit.[28] Detroit and its abandoned buildings had become the dramatic symbols of a down-turned economy.

During his visit to Detroit, Mortan asked Griffioen to give him a guided tour of popular sites out-of-town photographers frequent. After Griffioen's record-breaking photo story, he became a default aficionado of Detroit's ruins, or at least the popularly photographed ones. He'd receive up to five calls a week from journalists who wanted him to show them around Detroit. "At first," Griffioen recalls, "you're really flattered by it, like, 'Whoa, these professional guys are interested in what I have to say and show

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[25]Mortan

[26]That article, originally available at http://www.viceland.com/int/v16n2/htdocs/schools-out-forever-625.php, has since been incorporated into Vice proper. It is available at http://www.vice.com/read/schools-out-forever-625-v16n2.

[27]Mortan.

[28]Mortan notes that in July 2009 alone the Packard Auto Plant was used by "the *New York Times*, the British *Daily Mirror*, and the Polish *Auto Motor* as a visual for stories it has no concrete connection to other than occupying the same city."

them.' But you get worn down trying to show them all the different sides of the city, then watching them go back and write the same story as everyone else."[29] "The photographers are the worst," he adds.[30] "Basically the only thing they're interested in shooting is ruin porn."[31] With that (probably off-handed) comment, Griffioen coined the term "ruin porn."

To work toward a robust definition of ruin porn, I proceed with answers to a handful of questions: What is this history of this neologism? What do other "porn" neologisms contribute to an understanding of "ruin porn"? What does the addition of "porn" indicate? What are ruin porn's defining characteristics and tropes? How is ruin porn typically consumed? What is pornographic about ruin porn?

Etymology of Porn Neologisms

"'Ruin porn' belongs to a set of compounds," notes media content scholar Fred Vultee, "first appearing in the early 1970s," the first being "horror-porn."[32] Officially the porn neologism denotes "written or visual material that emphasizes the sensuous or sensational aspects of a non-sexual subject, appealing to its audience in a manner likened to the titillating effect of pornography."[33] The list of these neologisms is extensive: food porn, disaster porn, climate porn, blank porn, hope porn, positivity porn, animal porn, shoe porn, real estate porn, war porn, weather porn, nuke porn, September 11 porn, guitar

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[29]Mortan.
[30]Ibid.
[31]Ibid.
[32]Fred Vultee, "Finding Porn in the Ruin," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 28, no. 2: 142–3. It's interesting to note that Vultee's research explores media content, practice, and effects, especially in conflicts and crises.
[33]OED Online, s.v. "porn, n.2," accessed April 24, 2015. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/148003?result=2&rskey=G83L15&.

porn, and death porn, to name a few.[34] In so far as the porn moniker has morphed into a meme of its own, the list of porns is seemingly endless. All of these porn neologisms emphasize the metaphorically erotic allure of the corresponding subject matter in a decidedly visual, especially photographic, way.

Characteristics and Tropes of Ruin Porn

The visual tropes of ruin porn include empty space; the encroachment of nature on the built environment; the absence of people but the presence of human elements (e.g., bygone tools, machines, ephemera); the presence of institutional remnants (e.g., medical files, a gurney, or a rotary telephone); graffiti, especially of the apocalyptic or anarchist variety; typically a soft color palette reminiscent of former decades' interior designing styles, especially pastel greens, blues yellows, and oranges; dramatic lighting; graphic textures such as peeling paint; contrasting visual referents combined to emphasize the effects of an ever-voracious capitalism, such as an abandoned factory with an active skyscraper in the background; and elements of destruction such as strewn objects, broken windows, and collapsed floors. Ruin porn photographs also tend to show higher levels of saturation and contrast and are typically in color, but not always.

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[34]Katharine Nemeth explains: "Ruin photography is not the only trend associated with "porn" or a voyeuristic way of viewing a subject. Related terms include "food porn," or the hyper realistic, sensationalized photographs of food, "disaster porn," or the strange allure of viewing man made or weather related wreckage, and "climate porn," the mediated, doom-laden photographs of global warming impacts. For instance, "climate porn" may be associated with an image of a polar bear in the Arctic, threatened by melting ice. Attaching "porn" to a subject has become a means for journalists and scholars to criticize a type of photography. "Blank porn," in essence, suggests that photograph serves to draw a perverse or an extreme emotional response from those who view it. Calling a style of photography "porn" may also serve as a way for viewers to admit the pleasure they get from viewing an otherwise taboo subject." See Katharine Nemeth, "'Ruin Porn' or the Reality of Ruin?: A Rhetorical Analysis of Andrew Moore's *Detroit Disassembled*," PhD dissertation (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, 2013), 60.



Figure 22. Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, "Ballroom, Lee Plaza Hotel, 2006."[35]

Ruin Pornographers and their Mediums

Ruin porn photographers range from fine art photographers represented by Chelsea galleries who can demand as much as $16,000 for a photograph of Detroit ruins, to urban explorers and the average Instagram users, who use pre-programmed filters to accentuate and dramatize decay.[36] Photos of ruins are as accessible as the ruins themselves, some places, like Detroit, more accessible than others.

[35]This photograph was accessed from Marchand Meffre, "The Ruins of Detroit," accessed May 15, 2015. http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit/26. It appears in Yves Marchand, and Romain Meffre, *The Ruins of Detroit* (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2010). This is also the first Google image result for "ruin porn," which directs to Chayka (http://hyperallergic.com/16596/detroit-ruin-porn/).

[36]See Artsy recent auction results for Andrew Moore: Artsy, "Auction Results for Andrew Moore," accessed May 12, 2015. https://www.artsy.net/artist/andrew-moore/auction-results.

Ruin porn is exclusively ocularcentric. The mediums of ruin porn are all photographic and predominantly digital: Flickr, Instagram, Tumblr, and popular news sites like the Atlantic, CityLab, and the Huffington Post. In fact, Google returns 125,000 results for "ruin porn," the first of which is a Huffington Post page that collects five of their ruin porn related articles about Detroit, the de-facto mecca of ruin porn.[37] Curiously a Google search of "Detroit" returns 352,000,000 results and within the first five results is a *New York Times* article that contains the word "apocalyptic."

What Makes Ruin Porn Pornographic

Subjects with "porn" tacked on at the end, like those mentioned above, do not typically conjure sexuality. Rather, it is the proliferation of a few popular porns – disaster porn, food porn ruin porn – that has availed the moniker to other taxonomies as a quotidian way of describing both a type of image (sensational, engrossing, etc.) and a type of consumer. As a consumer, adding "porn" is a way saying *I unabashedly enjoy this subject matter and looking at images of this subject matter.*[38] It is also a way of identifying those consumers and criticizing the images they consume.

These neologisms are typically deployed first as epithets, as a means of discrediting or generally criticizing the photographers behind the images, who often use "heavyhanded juxtapositions" and "cheesy techniques."[39] A chief criticism of porns is

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[37]Results 2-5 are: Tumblr, Wikipedia, Fast Company, and Instagram. Google results, though not an official scholarly resource, reflect how internet users typically explore certain subjects. The fact that Google returns the Huffington Post page first indicates that Google's algorithm believes, of all the pages on the internet, that page is the most relevant to the query. The Huffington Post cannot buy that position; it's only granted by persistent use.

[38]Nemeth adds, "Calling a style of photography 'porn' may also serve as a way for viewers to admit the pleasure they get from viewing an otherwise taboo subject." (60)

[39]Nemeth, 62. In his eponymous *Context* article on the prevalence of Disaster Porn, sociologist Timothy Recuber explains, "In its first decade in print, then, disaster pornography was primarily employed as an

that the images – especially when it comes to ruins, disasters, and climate – often over-emphasize a particularly captivating component while ignoring or de-emphasizing the grosser problem, be it the deleterious effects of capitalism, the horror of a recent earthquake, or the peril that the earth faces with our warming climate. The porns ignore those more important conversations and say, instead, *Yeah, but look at this amazing photo!* Or, they never even progress to ignoring those factors because the image is just too seductive.

Photographs within any of the porn neologisms are successful images when they bring pleasure to their viewer. These images are titillating, engrossing, sometimes pensive. They capitalize on their allure. The term "porn" is added to the subject to indicate that the image is in some way sensational, voyeuristic, hidden or secretive, seductive, exploitative, graphic, taboo, or exotic – but also non-sexual. A photograph of a cheeseburger stacked tall with glistening melted cheese and steam lifting from the soft, fresh-baked bun is a prime example of food porn. A photograph of a middle aged woman with her hand over her chest and tears in her eyes, standing before a pile of rubble (the context of which indicates it was once her home) under cloudy skies and staring off into the distance is a clichéd example of disaster porn. These types of images cash in on having an engrossing referent, a referent that draws all attention to itself, often with spectacular magnetism.

Photography is the connection between ruins and pornography, the components of "ruin porn," just as it is photographer that enables all of the porn neologisms. In

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epithet directed at depictions of extreme suffering in developing countries. Such depictions were identified as problematic because of their tendency to sensationalize and simplify complex geopolitical realities, and thereby encourage Western military adventurism under the guise of humanitarian action." See Timothy Recuber, "Disaster Porn!," *Context* Vol. 12, no. 2: 30. See also Nemeth, 60.

particular, it is photography's unique ability to invite prolonged viewing. Ruin porn is the over-functionality of the referent in an image containing ruins. In fact, it is the only (perceptible) referent, the specific referent in question – not the circumstances that produced the referent, not the feelings of the people in the image, not the consequences of the referent. In order for the "porn" moniker to kick-in there must be a disconnect between the alluring component of an image and every possible connection that exists *beyond* and *before* its visuality.

Porn is enticing to view, *and* porn is a type of imagery that elides concomitant issues and circumstances; porn is successful when all that is consumed is porn. These are two ways of thinking about porn, especially as it relates to the burgeoning bevy of neologisms. It's difficult to speak about food porn and ruin porn under the same treatment of what "porn" might mean, because there are few mitigating circumstances behind a photograph of a beautiful cheeseburger, for example, while there are all sorts of circumstances surrounding the image of the woman in front of her destroyed home.

The colloquial use of the term "porn" identifies an image that has only one goal: to gratify. This is why these images are both adored and criticized – they are mediators of thoughtless seduction and promoters of senseless pleasure, pleasure for pleasure's sake. There are, what might be called, benign porns and situated porns, porns that can carry great political and sociological weight, weight that is often overlooked or ignored *on behalf of* the enticing visuality of the so-called porn(ographic) image. Shoe porn, food porn, and animal porn are pictures of desirable shoes, yummy looking food, or cute animals. The images are mindlessly all-consuming and ignore the circumstances surrounding them, but this ignorance is benign, and the whole point is to merely enjoy

puppies, for example; it's not likely there are human rights issues hiding behind the images. Nobody is hurt by the adoration of a puppy photo. For this reason, criticism of this type of porn is typically levied form an angle of aestheticism or the photographers' attendant abilities.

But situated porns, like ruin, disaster, and climate, do have those circumstances, and they have them in ways that, it is argued, should not be so easily excised. And yet, the images are consumed in the same way, for the sole pleasure of their consumption. So criticism of these types of porn is levied both from the aesthetic side (as above) but also from the side that asks about the circumstances surrounding the image that are overlooked by the strength and punch of the visual referent. The point of that referent, of that porn, is to excite, pleasure, arouse, nothing more. Whatever the context of the image, the use of the term porn means that the context is elided on behalf of the pleasure. These images are predicated on an objectification that reduces all elements to objects of consumption and nothing more.

This objectification might be benign if it was contained to the one-to-one relationship of image and person, but these situated porns – and we might as well include pornography proper here – are criticized for the how these ways of consuming are reproduced on the cultural level. One might say it's no big deal to view these images in the privacy of your home, whatever the images are. But when there are industries and organizations built up around this type of consumption, or when the sheer volume of images (say online) produces a following of its own, the flattening that occurs by the objectification of the referent matters. Such mass objectification threatens to enshrine the particular objectified referent as an object of desire alone, evacuating from the image any

sense of personhood or context. This, of course, is the hallmark criticism of pornography and it is perfectly applicable here.

In a somewhat passing comment in his seminal *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes spoke of pornography proper as a deceptively simplified or reduced type:

> Another unary photograph is the pornographic photograph. (I am not saying the erotic photograph….) [There is nothing] more homogenous than a pornographic photograph. It is always a naïve photograph, without intention and without calculation. Like a shop window which shows only one illuminated piece of jewelry, it is completely constituted by the presentation of only one thing: sex….[40]

Barthes distinguishes pornography from erotic photography noting that a Mapplethorpe image is composed with attention to texture and light, which allows the viewer's mind to find interest in other components of the image than the naked form. Pornography, on the other hand, is unary: there is no other referent to consume than sex. In Barthe's own phraseology, pornography is the absence of the punctum on behalf of an enticingly seductive type of studium that's combined referents meld into one singular purpose: sex pleasure.

The unary nature of pornography is the major criticism levied against ruin porn (and the other situated porns). In glorifying ruins, ruin photography does so at the expense of the situation of those ruins. That situation includes: Who once worked or lived here? When and why was this place built? Why is this place in ruin? How does this blight affect the neighborhood, the environment, the economy? What larger socio-economic factors may have caused this ruin? What commentary on the consequences of late-capitalism does this ruin pose? What is the future of this place? These are important questions and only the first of many questions that could be asked of almost

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[40]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 39-41.

every image labeled "ruin porn." Yet, insofar as the images over-succeed in their singular allure, these questions can be lost in the glut of visual pleasure. (Unsurprisingly, this echoes the very criticisms levied against pornography proper.) Critics' main concern is that ruin porn captivates its viewers and "fosters a passive, neutralized position in relation to the image content."[41] This criticism is directed both at the photographer's convictions and intentions as well as the viewer's disinterest.

An additional but certainly not secondary set of questions concerns the form and genre itself, specifically the relationship between context and image. In pornography proper, context, if it is ever introduced, is merely a Trojan horse for the ensuing action. In pornography there is no interest or attention to the backstory of the porn stars – where they grew up, what their hobbies are, etc. – because it distracts from the singular purpose of consuming sex content. The actors' personal lives and the situation of the stage or set, for example, have no baring on the success or allure of a pornographic film; in fact, they are distractions that are avoided.

The same is true for ruin porn, even while the edges of that genre aren't always clean. The following questions help determine that line: Is there any text whatsoever associated with the images? Does that text include historical records? Does that text include information *other than* the look and feel of the place? Does that text include the names of people who might have associated with the ruin in question? Does that text help to explain who are what was in this place? Does the text propose, explicitly or not, a call to action regarding the ruins in question? Additionally, how are the images of ruin presented: large or small, color or black and white, many or few. If the answers to any of

[41]DeSilvey and Edensor, 470.

these questions dead-end in the pleasurable visuality of the image itself, then they are likely to point to the image being a part of the ruin porn genre.

A second but less politically significant criticism concerns the capabilities and craft of the photographer – ruins are easy photographs. Riddled with beauty and mystery, these images are both curious and attractive, but there's a sense that the scene itself is doing the work of the photograph, rather than a photographer. When it comes down to ruin porn images, it is more common than not that it is the interesting scenery that the photographer has found, not necessarily the technical skills of the photographer. This line of criticism says that to take photos of ruins is to take easy photos, like photographing a painting, a sunset, or a beautiful valley – views already compellingly composed.

History of Ruins in Western Culture

The built environment has always displayed ruins, but it's been a particularly modern phenomenon to be fascinated with ruins. "It is not really until the Renaissance—that is, until the advent of a modernity that conceives itself in relation to the remains of the past—that the ruin becomes an essential aesthetic concept and recurrent image in Western art," writes Brian Dillon.[42] In fact, it appears that the rise of ruin appreciation is chronologically linked to "the emerging field of aesthetics, and its interest in sensory perception, the cultivation of human imagination and understanding, and the development of an appreciation for nature."[43] The reverent turn to the ancients that characterized much of the Renaissance accompanied a turn to (what was left of) their built

[42]Brian Dillon, "Introduction: A Short History of Decay," 12.
[43]Cairns and Jacobs, 182-3.

environment. Returning to the philosophies of Aristotle, for example, the renaissance worldview was decidedly humanistic if even inflected by the power of the Church. As such, depictions of ruins were depictions of a victorious Church over a crumbled Roman empire, and yet allegory was already present in the didactic scenes of Renaissance art. "The Baroque imagination," notes Caitline DeSilvey and Tim Edensor, "cast the ruin more ambiguously, mining its allegorical possibilities while dwelling on the melancholic power of transience and decay."[44] This period saw the allegorical use of ruins through grand and dramatic gestures, not in quotidian landscapes – meaning that ruins were props on a stage to both thoughts of the ancients and the power of the Divine. The idea of a painting with ruins as the primary subject matter was still a few hundred years off.[45] Wolfgang Kemp and Joyce Rheuban explain that in the decades that led up to the blossoming of the Renaissance "what was considered 'painterly' was that which was finished, splendid, and clean."[46] By the end of the 17th century, with a society growing steadily more urban, this tide began to change.

18th Century, Romanticism

By the 18th century the dramatic and elaborate gestures that characterized Baroque art had passed along the allegorical appeal of ruins. Enlightenment scholars, theorists, philosophers, and architects turned to the ruins for their didactical qualities: we can learn

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[44]DeSilvey and Edensor, 466.

[45]See Wolfgang Kemp and Joyce Rheuban, "Images of Decay: Photography in the Picturesque Tradition," *October* 54 (Autumn 1990): 102: "Decay was not always considered an appropriate subject for painting. On the contrary, at a time when no less than nine-tenths of the population lived outside as much as inside sod, thatch, and wooden structures, and the few stone structures in the cities rose form muddy, filth-covered, streets and a nest of squalid shops, shacks, and stalls, it was the task of painting to depict magnificent, ornamented stone structures, with streets and squares paved with beautiful marble slabs, gardens, and smooth, uniform brickwork."

[46]Kemp and Rheuban, 104.

from the ancients how to build lasting structures.[47] Ruins were "empirical evidence of a lost golden classical age," which "gave way to a more impressionistic appreciation of ruins and their capacity, even as contrived reproductions, to stimulate subjective emotions such as melancholy."[48] The rise of Romanticism in the 18th century and the turn to the picturesque brought ruins to center stage of Western culture, especially in the visual arts.

The Romantic tradition took over where the Enlightenment was left in the ashes of the French and American Revolutions – clear depictions that reason/rationale was not all that was needed for a successful and growing society. Romanticism caught its stride from the late 18th century through the mid 19th century and promoted individualism, reverence for the natural and supernatural world; personal experience, senses, and emotions; predilections for the exotic, the foreign, the unknown; and the irrational, visionary, and transcendental. As a reaction (or correction) to Enlightenment ways of thinking, romantics rejected precepts of order, idealization, and rationality. These were the artists, philosophers, and politicians who saw the dead end of Enlightenment rationale, or perhaps it was the narrowness of scope. Romantic artists looked to the natural world for inspiration and it is from these artists that we get the tradition of the picturesque.

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[47]See Michael S. Roth, Claire L. Lyons, and Charles Merewether. *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1997), 11: "In the eighteenth century a search for original meaning was secularized, and being trained in modes of research and argument lent individuals legitimacy in deciphering the significance of the past in relation to the present. Once the fragments of the past were uncovered, it was assumed that the trained archaeologist could piece them together and even rebuild the past. Ruins had become the object of science, not faith, and they offered crucial evidence in the effort to understand not the workings of a providential plan of Redemption, but instead the history of great civilizations."

[48]Cairns and Jacobs, 168.

Brian Dillon suggests that by the 18th century "a veritable craze for ruins had overtaken Europe."[49] To use the term that was revived by Rose Macauley's classic 1953 study, *Pleasure of Ruins*, Europeans of a certain class possessed what has been called ruin lust (German, *Ruinenlust*). Aristocratic estates were incomplete if they did not possess ruins, even artificial ruins. As Dillon notes, ruins-as-décor were an "emblem of its owner's very modern sensibility."[50] "The taste for decay," adds Michael S. Roth et al, had become a mark of aesthetic sensitivity for many aristocratic Europeans."[51] Ruins were thought to be prompts for introspection, inspiration, melancholy, and fantasy. They cashed in on and provided for everything that the Romantic mind wished. Ruins – "whether real ruins or fake, or fakes assembled of real archeological fragments" -- brought to the fore an appreciation for decay and the aesthetic appeal of dilapidation, which was a decidedly new way of valuing ruins.[52] It's difficult to imagine in our current Western context, but the presence of ruins on estate grounds was not necessarily a minor presentation. As Caitline DeSilvey and Tim Edensor write, "Ruined hermitages and crumbled faux-classical temples appeared in formal gardens, designed to provoke a particular set of emotions in the observer and encourage musing on the aesthetics of pleasurable decay."[53] Ruins became the visual muse for Romantic ideals as ruins were valued *not* for the cultures or civilizations they represented – that is, for their original architectural purpose. Rather, ruins became vehicles of symbolic projection, which typically involved reflections on mortality and the power of nature in relation to the built

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[49]Brian Dillon, *Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins, from Turner to the Present Day* (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), 6.
[50]Dillon, *Ruin Lust*, 6.
[51]Roth, Lyons, and Merewether, 3.
[52]Naomi Stead, "The Value of Ruins: Allegories of Destruction in Benjamin and Speer," *Form/Work: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the Built Environment* 6 (October 2003): 2, accessed April 14, 2015. https://naomistead.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/stead_value_of_ruins_2003.pdf.
[53]DeSilvey and Edensor, 466.

world. This symbolic association stayed with ruins in popular culture and visual art through the present day.

Romanticism, Finitude, and the Fragment

In his *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*, romantic scholar Thomas McFarland describes how "incompleteness, fragmentation, and ruin…not only receive a special emphasis in Romanticism but also a certain perspective seems actually to define the phenomenon."[54] The Romantic worldview was one of feeling incomplete; a Romantic would be acutely aware of the feeling of existence short-changing them on their sense of feeling at home in the world. Romantics often expressed the feeling of being disconnected or estranged from their true home, their fullness as humans. For this reason, "Romanticism is especially fecund in explicit fragmentation and incompleteness;" fragmentation was a condition of the time and way of thinking that permeated both thoughts about what it meant to be a human and what it meant to experience the world.[55] It seems little use in attempting the chicken and egg conversation between ruins and the fragment in Romantic thought – were Romantics enamored by ruins because of their preoccupation of the fragment, or were Romantics preoccupied with the fragment because of their love of ruins? – but it bears pausing to reiterate the fact that fragmentation was a lens through which Romantics viewed the world, making ruins obvious sites to consider.

For the romantic, the ruin provided visual and material access to the sense that all was not right in the world; the ruin was appreciated as an affect-laden tableau for (even

[54]Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 7.
[55]McFarland, 23.

passively) meditating on the decidedly subjective concerns that riddled the romantic worldview. The ruin provided an available screen on which to project concerns about finitude and estrangement. Ruins were evidence for the sense that not all is heading down a progressive path. Objects break. Bodies grow weak. Reason and rationale cannot stop the ubiquity of decay, in objects or beings. The romantic imagination gravitated toward the ruined rather than the pristine (or new) because the ruined is a vehicle for contemplating the romantic human condition. Romantics, more than any other historical period or group, wholly grasped the value of ruins for thinking about what it means to be human. This affective attribution that Romantics made in relation to the ruin would become a hallmark, perhaps the hallmark, of the allure of ruins, for generations to come.

The Picturesque

What the picturesque means today as a genre in the visual arts and what it meant at its origins are very different ideas. Today, the term "picturesque" brings to mind the Hudson River School or any pleasant bucolic landscape. It has been very astutely (and critically) described as the "over-functionalization of the aesthetic," a conscientiously aesthetically-saturated experience.[56] The picturesque today is associated with that which

[56]Kemp and Rheuban, 105. Admittedly "over-functionalization of the aesthetic" is a loaded phrase, for what would be the under-functionalization and what is the function of the aesthetic anyway? I gravitate toward this phrase because, to me, it points to the way in which the picturesque can have an association with *nothing but* beauty, meaning that the value of a picturesque piece, apart from any nuances to style or method, begins and ends in its value as a work of beauty. Kemp and Rheuban use this term to speak about the role of the aesthetic in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They add, "We live at a time in which the highest aim of art is not to disengage itself from such notions as perfection and suitability, or such functions as moral enlightenment and edification." (105) Elsewhere, considering the Rushkin's and others' critiques of the picturesque, Kemp and Rheuban write, "the picturesque demands a perception of reality that only functions when all associations with utility and morality, along with historical and political issues,

makes a good picture, that which is naturally beautiful, or that which, in its beauty, seems to be supernatural, beyond real or the pinnacle of realities beauty.

At its inception, however, the picturesque was a genre that depicted more of the built environment the 18th century appeal to the contemplation on mortality. In an astutely crafted explanation, art historian Wolfgang Kemp and film scholar Joyce Rheuban, explain how the picturesque emerged in the 18th and 19th century and found its greatest expression through the contemporaneous development of the photographic medium.[57]

Kemp and Rheuban explain that, in the 19th century, an appreciation for the picturesque was a marker of heightened cultural credibility. To value the picturesque was to be able to see beauty where others don't. Where an ordinary person might see a pile of stones that need to be cleaned up or reset, the picturesque appreciator sees a compelling composition that they find intriguing. The appreciation for decay, disorder, and desuetude, was an indication that one had a heightened aesthetic palette both because it's more challenging and seemingly counterintuitive to value what is, at face value, ugly and unkempt *and* because the picturesque requires being attuned to irregularities in the daily landscape which would otherwise be overlooked.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theoreticians classified the picturesque a separate genre of painting, alongside the sublime and the beautiful. Like many aspects of photography, the picturesque was initially a tradition in painting. The beautiful and sublime accounted for "everything that appeared smooth, bright, symmetrical, new, new,

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are kept out of consideration for the sake of aesthetic effect." (107) Considering these passages, it becomes even more apparent the link between critiques of early pictorialism and critiques of ruin porn.

[57]See Kemp and Rheuban. I lean heavily on this article for a very concise introduction to the development of the aesthetic category called the picturesque, especially since the authors give special attention to the photographic medium as a necessary partner to the picturesque's rise in Western culture.

(sic) whole, and strong" whereas the picturesque was "that which is multifarious, irregular, unevenly lit, worn, and strange."[58] Kemp and Rheuban continue, "Whatever was in the process of decay was potentially picturesque, because one could detect in it more, and more obvious, signs of wear and irregularity."[59] Theoretical texts such as Sir Uvedal Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794) explain that the beautiful is anything young and fresh while the picturesque is anything depicting age or decay. At the turn of the 19th century, then, the picturesque had close to the opposite meaning of its 21st century meaning.

Curiously, however, an appreciation for decay and ruins seems to have built-in moral and theoretical problems that were as prevalent in 200 years ago as they are today. Kemp and Rheuban relay an anecdote from Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* in which at town debate the merits of the picturesque as a method of crude city planning. Kemp and Rheuban write, "The landed gentry, who would gladly arrange their environment according to painterly prescriptions, were tempted to preserve the broken-down houses in their villages in this painterly condition."[60] With a prescient admonition as relevant today as it was then, Price "warned these enthusiastic aesthetes against this by reminding them that morality must take precedence over the principle of the picturesque."[61]

Prominent 19th century art critic John Ruskin posited a different but equally valuable critique that remains resonant. He warned against investing artistic merit in pure (and literal) superficiality. Said differently, Ruskin worried that an overzealous appreciation for the picturesque could privilege visual appeal over functionality and, what

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[58]Kemp and Rheuban, 104.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Ibid., 106. (See also Sir Uvedal Price, *Essay on the Picturesque*, 1794.)
[61]Kemp and Rheuban, 106.

we would call, social justice. For instance, in Price's anecdote, were the landed gentry to preserve the dilapidation of neighboring villages, they would also be preserving the squalor of said village's inhabitants. Prince asks: At what cost do we privilege the picturesque *over* quality of life? Ruskin's argument is as equally critical but less moralistic, more theoretical; he argued that art's purpose is to help us "to see *and* to feel," so if we're only seeing, we're missing the point.[62] Ruskin, thus, brings into question the theoretical standing of the picturesque genre as a whole within the visual arts. Kemp and Rheuban, summarizes both Price and Ruskin stating, "[The] picturesque demands a perception of reality that only functions when all associations with utility and morality, along with historical and political issues, are kept out of consideration for the sake of aesthetic effect."[63] Said differently, the picturesque is defined as "the primacy of the aesthetic over all historical, political, and social implications."[64] Here again the Romantics were prescient as both critiques remain viable today in the arena of ruin porn.

The Picturesque and Photography

Ultimately, Ruskin and Kemp are curious about the ways photography took up and affected the picturesque tradition. They identify four types of picturesque photographs: those that deal with the superficiality of objects in a state of decay, those that highlight the decay of "objects of civilization," those who presage the eventual fall of civilization, and those that appeal to the conditions of the human condition.[65] Of course, there are other expressions of photographing the picturesque, but these remain the most

[62]George P. Landrow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 225.
[63]Kemp and Rheuban, 107.
[64]Ibid., 111.
[65]See Kemp and Rheuban, 112-33.

prominent from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, and they ring true today as well.

Photography and the picturesque essentially grew up together. As such, photography became *the* artistic medium for visualizing ruins. The picturesque would continue to have decades of success in painting, even as the term morphed over two centuries of use.

Psychological Theories

In the past few years, as ruins scholarship has begun to gain more traction, there have been repeated references to the psychological merit or reasons for ruinophilia; scholars turn to psychology for answers to the question, Why do we like to look at ruins? Among the theories sited, a handful are worth treating directly, if even briefly. They include: hedonic reversal, the tragedy paradox, bad is stronger than good, the benign-violations theory, and *schaudenfreude*. I'm not convinced that each (or any) one presents a legitimate reason for the allure of ruin photography, or that the collective whole gives a concise explanation.[66] However, I do think that there is a contribution here that is worth hearing.

Of the scholars that discuss ruins, there is a growing group of scholars who write at length about the experience of ruins, especially how ruins feel, what the experience of walking among ruins feels like. I'm curious about what, for lack of a better term, the subconscious is up to at the site or experience of ruins. What human psychological phenomena are triggered by the site or experience of ruins? For those that find pleasure

experiencing ruins, I'm curious about the unrecognizable factors or conditions that might color that experience.

Hedonic Reversal

Hedonic reversal is taking pleasure in something that is not typically thought to be pleasurable or is typically considered a negative experience. Enjoying the pain of a chili pepper in your mouth, taking pleasure from the tears of a sad movie, or being thrilled by the fear that accompanies riding a roller coaster are all examples of this phenomenon. Psychologists explain hedonic reversal through the lens of benign masochism, which "holds that the whole range of human pleasures that derive from negative emotions or aversions is based directly upon the experience of negative sensations and experiences."[67] Pleasure researcher Paul Rozin continues, "We may come to enjoy our body's negative responses to situations when we realize that there is no, or minimal, actual danger."[68] When we realize that the danger is a ruse, we overcome our fear or sadness, via a mind-over-matter type of negotiation, and derive satisfaction in the pleasure of no longer being in danger. We enjoy the sensation because we know it can't hurt us, even though it feels like it could. We delight in experiences that, at first blush, threaten to be dangerous, but when we push through the false alarms we experience a sense of pleasure and mastery over the stimulus. And this seems especially so for works of art.

In a 2013 study, Rozin concluded, "More than any other hedonic reversal, the liking for sadness is engaged by works of art; it has an aesthetic quality."[69] Applied to

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[67]Paul Rozin, "Preadaptation and the Puzzles And Properties of Pleasure," in *Well Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, ed. D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwarz (New York: Russel Sage, 1999), 20.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Paul Rozin et al., "Glad to be sad, and other examples of benign masochism," *Judgment and Decision*

images of ruins, hedonic reversal (and benign masochism) explain how we may feel a sense of dread or sadness at the images – they may disturb us in some way – but our distance, once removed via the image itself (from the initial referent) and twice removed as we typically will not have experience of the ruined scene, we can peer into the photograph unafraid. The moment of realization in the case of art, the realization that our body has been tricked into suspecting danger, is when the illusion that the photograph *is* its referent, for instance, vanishes. When we realize that it's just a picture or just a painting, the sensation of pleasure arrives.

The Tragedy Paradox

The tragedy paradox is similar: the sadder the aesthetic experience, the more we find pleasure in it. As one recent study concludes, "We simply like to be moved."[70] We enjoy the feeling of being moved, taken to the highs and lows of experience. We enjoy that psychological terrain, but may enjoy it, in part, because we know we can return to stasis. The textbook example for this is why we enjoy sad films. But it also occurs in tragic romantic breakups when there is pleasure in feeling and experiencing deeply, in being connected to what feels like the limits of human experience. Now, a photograph of ruins may not take us to the brinks of the human experience, but we may be awestruck by its magnitude, its destruction, its apparent display of failure, loss, and brokenness (of all sorts). The takeaway here is the pleasure in feeling – we want to be moved.

Making 8, no. 4 (July 2013): 446.

[70]Julian Hanich, Valentin Wagner, Mira Shah, Thomas Jacobsen, and Winfried Menninghaus. " Why We Like to Watch Sad Films. The Pleasure of Being Moved in Aesthetic Experiences." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 8, no. 2: 130.

Bad over Good

As it turns out, we appear to be predisposed or on the lookout for the bad over the good. "The greater power of bad events over good ones is found in everday events, major life events (e.g., trauma), close relationship outcomes, social network patterns, interpersonal interactions, and learning processes," explains researcher Roy Baumeister in his 2001 *Review of General Psychology* article, "Bad is Stronger than Good."[71] Baumeister and his team of researches conclude that with very, very few exceptions we are programmed to pay more attention to bad events over good, and the postulate that this is an adaptive (viz survival) mechanism.[72] To be clear: "Bad emotions, bad parents, and bad feedback have more impact than good ones, and bad information is processed more thoroughly than good."[73] We avoid bad reputations more than we seek good ones. We form bad impressions and cast bad stereotypes more readily and to greater effect than we do good ones.

If bad and good were two folks waving to us from an airport concourse we'd notice bad immediately and see good as an afterthought. As a result, Baumesiter suggests that "individuals who are attuned to preventing and rectifying bad things should flourish and thrive more than individuals oriented primarily toward maximizing good things."[74] We're on the lookout for the bad and we notice it, log it, and regard it more than good. According to this research, if we're shown at the same time a picture of a beautiful sunset and a picture of a derelict factory, we'll remember the factory more than the sunset.

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[71]Roy Baumeister et al., "Bad is Stronger than Good," *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 4 (December 2001): 323.
[72]See Baumesiter et al., 362: "Although it may seem pessimistic to conclude that bad is stronger than good, we do not think that such pessimism is warranted. As we have suggested, there are several reasons to think it may be highly adaptive for human beings to respond more strongly to bad than good."
[73]Baumeister et al, 323.
[74]Ibid., 357.

We'll look at it longer. We'll log it into our memory in a more engaged way than the sunset. Put more plainly, we categorize ruin photographs as bad, so we pay attention.

Benign Violations Theory

Further, recent studies suggest that when bad events occur and when these bad events are perceived as non-threatening from the get-go – that is, there is no initial threat (as in hedonic reversal and benign masochism) – the experience of those events may actually be pleasurable to us (in addition to also eliciting disgust). The theory that supports this claim is called the benign violations hypothesis and it posits that "humor is elicited by benign violations" and "suggests that three conditions are jointly necessary and sufficient for eliciting humor: A situation must be appraised as a violation, a situation must be appraised as benign, and these two appraisals must occur simultaneously."[7576] Moral psychology researchers A. Peter McGraw and Caleb Warren, who propose the benign violations hypothesis, find that three conditions in particular make a violation benign: "the presence of an alternative norm suggesting that the situation is acceptable," (…) "weak commitment to the violated norm," (…) "psychological distance from the violation."[77]

The benign violations theory essentially suggests that if something is experienced as far enough removed, psychologically speaking – that is, by distance, degree, time, association – the (typically moral) violation will be perceived as benign, and as such

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[75]A. Peter McGraw and Caleb Warren, "Benign Violations: Making Immoral Behavior Funny," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 8 (August 2010): 1141.
[76]McGraw and Warren, 1142.
[77]Ibid., 1141. McGraw and Warren also suggest "that humor is a positive and adaptive response to benign violations. Humor provides a healthy and socially beneficial way to react to hypothetical threats, remote concerns, minor setbacks, social faux pas, cultural misunderstandings, and other benign violations people encounter on a regular basis." (1146)

avails itself to humor and appreciation. (This is where we get the clichéd stand-up comedian's apology, "Too soon?") For the majority of Americans, for example, the ruins of Detroit are overpowered by experience of alternative norms, which suggest that these ruins are not the norm but the exception. Is someone possess any degree of psychological distance between themselves and the ruins of Detroit, as experienced in images of those ruins, they will be perceived as non-threatening, benign.

This explains the strong difference of perspective often espoused by Detroiters and outsiders regarding the ruins of Detroit. One person's daily tragedy – it's in their neighborhood, greatly affects their life on a daily basis to the extent of causing stress – is another person's punchline. One artist's photograph of an abandoned and disheveled library, aptly composed with attention to composition, color, and space is another person's photograph of the library that would be their child's library on account of it being around the block from their home. These two photographers have potentially different commitments to the scenes in which they photograph *as will* the viewers of each image. Both in making the photograph and consuming the photograph, a photograph of ruins will be perceived as benign if the person in question possesses enough psychological distance from the referent in the image. Though it's curt to suggest, if we like to view ruin porn, it's likely because we just don't care (enough) about the circumstances surrounding the referent in the image, the ruins themselves (and their circumstances, causes, and effects). Benign violations theory is a large piece to the puzzle that asks why we take pleasure in viewing images of ruins.

Schaudenfreude

Schaudenfreude—literally German for "harm" (*schaud-*) "joy" (*-freude*)—refers to taking delight in the pain of others. Of the aforementioned psychological theories and conditions, this is the most popular concept – we sometime like it when bad things happen to other people. *Schadenfreude* is most likely to occur when "people deserve their misfortunes" and when "misfortunes happen to people who are disliked."[78] But there can be joy in another's misfortune regardless of our evaluation of whether they deserve it or not. For example, one study found that when Dutch soccer fans learned that the rival German national soccer team had lost a match they expressed happiness.[79] The study concluded that the Dutch fans likely felt less "less inferior in terms of their social identity."[80] *Schaudenfreude* appears to be a survival (of the fittest) mechanism in which another's misfortune means that advantages come to the self, even if those advantages do not appear obvious, explicit, or even known. This is why when a group of people strongly identified with a particular political party witnessed an embarrassing situation from the opposing party – even when that situation is extreme in nature, to the extent of the death of deployed troops or collapsing economy—*schaudenfreude* is practically a given.[81]

Schaudenfreude has been identified, under various names, at least since the ancient Greeks. In the 20th century, René Girard was a scholar who has spent a considerable amount of work thinking about how another's misfortune brings pleasure to the self and calm to the group. According to Girard's "mimetic theory" all humans learn

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[78]David J.Y. Combs et al., "Politics, Schaudenfreude, and Ingroup Identification: The Sometimes Happy Thing about a Poor Economy and Death," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45 (2009): 635.
[79]Colin W. Leach et al., "Malicious Pleasure: Schadenfreude at the Suffering of Another Group," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(5): 923–943.
[80]Combs et al, 635.
[81]See Combs et al.

by imitation; we learn everything, absolutely everything, by imitation, from how to eat and speak to what to enjoy and what to desire. When people are mimicking each other's desires, they're in an unspoken competition for the desired object. All violence emerges from this shared desire. To alleviate the pressure of the shared desire, the community must redirect its violence onto a scapegoat. Girard studied many early civilizations' sacrificial rituals and concluded that when a scapegoat was established, and when it was believed that the scapegoat was the source of the community's problems, the death (or expulsion) of that scapegoat brought great relief to the community. But, of course, the calm can only be temporary since the scapegoat was never the source of the problem – it was the communities built in human desire and competition all along.

Both schaudenfreude and Girard's theories (mimesis, scapegoat) suggest that built into the human condition is a competitive survival mechanism that brings pleasure to the self when another, especially a rival, experiences misfortune. It's not hard to make the leap from these theories to pleasure in ruin photography, especially when the ruins in question occurred because of the opposite party's actions, or because the ruins occurred in a rival town. Even still, Girard's theory suggests that experiencing the blight of another person – viz viewing ruin photography – can bring a sense of calm, even euphoria.

Taboo, Morbid Curiosity, Memento Mori

One of the obvious connections between pornography and ruin porn is taboo. That which is taboo is off-limits, prohibited, potentially dangerous, but potentially as equally pleasurable. The taboo lies beyond propriety, in the realm of the illicit, the

immoral, the unusual, and the unknown, and its quality of being just out of reach, makes it all the more desirable. We don't outgrow the desire to trespass the proper boundaries placed upon us as teenagers – those boundaries only invite their own transgression. Katharine Nemeth thinks that calling an image 'ruin porn' may "serve as a way for viewers to admit the pleasure they get from viewing an otherwise taboo subject."[82] The very thing we know we shouldn't look at, is the very thing we just can't resist.

The allure of the taboo explains the morbid curiosity that accompanies rubbernecking in traffic. As the title of Eric Wilson's book explains, *Everyone Loves a Good Train Wreck*:

> Everyone loves a good train wreck. We are enamored of ruin. The deeper the darkness is, the more dazzling. Our secret and ecstatic wish: Let it all fall down.[83]

Wilson admits that it's not a particularly popular confession to say that your deepest wish is for disaster, but he thinks, echoing Carl Jung, it's part of what it means to be human – "to entertain our most destructive impulses without actually harming ourselves or others."[84] Morbid curiosities "help one to manage dangerous fears and desires, to learn what is essential and what is not" by keeping the dangerous elements within sight but out of harm's way.[85] It's a form of survival; when it comes to rubbernecking in traffic to view a terrible accident, what the mind processes in the background is an important message: if it could happen to them, it could happen to you.

At the same time, we live in a world, at least in the West, where death is sanitized and relegated to hospitals, nursing homes, hospice care facilities, and funeral homes. In the early part of the 20th century, death and the funeral rights occurred in the home; death

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[82]Nemeth, 60.
[83] Eric G. Wilson, *Everyone Loves a Good Train Wreck* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2012), 8.
[84]Ibid., 41.
[85]Ibid., 186.

was more a part of daily life than it is now. Now death is a taboo in its own right. It's among the most basic parts of human life while also being among the most sanitized. For instance, meat eaters in the West don't typically kill the animals they eat and don't typical witness the death (or life) of those animals.

Curiosity about death is a hallmark of Western philosophy. Especially during the late Middle Ages through the Renaissance, artists and thinkers depicted and reflected upon *memento mori*, which is translated as "remember that you will die" and, especially in the visual arts, is a set of tropes – skulls, hourglasses, wilted flowers, rotten food, smoke trails, and dead things – which was utilized to reflect upon the fleeting nature of life and the vanities there-in. In their book, *Buildings Must Die*, Stephen Cairns and Jane M. Jacobs cleverly suggest that, in ruin porn, we have a new type of iconography in the memento mori tradition:

> For rotten fruit we substitute spalling concrete, peeling paint, and moldering surfaces. For skulls we substitute earthquake-shattered churches, demolished brutalist office blocks, and crumbling housing estates. For hourglasses and trails of smoke we substitute obsolete buildings whose usefulness has long since been eclipsed by economic circumstances."[86]

Imagined in this way, ruin porn participates in the tradition of memento mori, reminding the viewer like this building, slowing dying, you too will one day age and die. However, in its often heavy-handed approach to describing dereliction, Cairns and Jacobs write, ruin porn has a "dulling effect, and does not, in the end, promote a more sustained contemplation of the inevitable place of decay, undoing, and destruction in creativity and life."[87]

Is ruin porn memento mori in the true sense of the term, a reminder that you will

[86]Cairns and Jacobs, 2.
[87]Ibid., 6.

die, meaning: Does ruin porn *actually* and *successfully* captivate the viewer and present the opportunity to contemplate on the frailty of life? Or, is the convention of ruin porn tapping into something, too tacky of a visual form to offer any true possibilities of self-reflection. While it's true that each person will experience an image differently, write Kyle Chayka thinks that ruin porn is not so much a memento mori for the viewer but for the viewers culture. Writing about Detroit, he suggests, "In the apex of our era of high-flying capitalism, Detroit ruin porn functions as…a call to remember that the same fate as the Motor City could befall all of our great cities, all of our unstable accomplishments."[88] He adds, "I think Detroit ruin porn is so popular, and such a well-traveled visual avenue, in part because we want to be reminded that it could all fail. The voyeurism isn't just gawking at the old buildings; it's gawking at the possibility and the danger of death."[89] If ruin porn participates at all in the iconographic tradition of memento mori, the reminder is not about the individual viewers life, nor about the human condition in general – ruin porn functions only as a reminder for and morbid curiosity about the fall of capitalism and ultimately civilization too. In ruin porn we see the threat of Wilson's 'secret and ecstatic wish': that it will all come crashing down, all of it.

George Bataille famously kept a photograph from 1910 of a Chinese prisoner undergoing *lingchi*, the ceremonial death by a thousand cuts in Chinese culture. In her *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag describes how Bataille, scholar of the erotic, kept the *lingchi* image as part memento mori, part unabashed indulgence in the taboo. It reminded him of his darkest pleasures, about which he could partake by viewing the

[88]Chayka
[89]Ibid.

image, and about his frailty as a human, as depicted in the morbid. For Bataille, the image served as an important daily reminder.[90]

Staring

As a scholar who explored the connection between pleasure and pain (in the erotic), Bataille can get away with having a picture of a severed man on his desk. And because he's Bataille, we forgive him for the taboo of having such a picture and confessing to the pleasure it brings. But for the rest of us, there are rules of polity which govern what is and isn't permissible to view in public, especially in the case of staring.

Most all of us grew up with parents who would implore us, "don't stare; it's not polite." We were taught that staring is a rude act of objectification.[91] But Rosemary Garldand-Thomson, in her *Staring: How We Look*, writes that staring is a natural, knowledge-gathering act – "everybody stares."[92] We live in a decidedly ocularcentric age in which staring is the natural response to the appearance of novelty. She describes staring as "an interrogative gesture" intent on unveiling the story to what otherwise seems illegible.[93] Illegibility, novelty on the visual landscape, prompts us to stare and to try to make sense of what we're seeing. Is this sight a threat? A boon? Staring is a natural response that seeks meaning and often begins as "profligate interest, stunned wonder, obsessive ocularity."[94] Garland-Thomson's work is focused on staring at other people,

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[90]See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 93.
[91]Curiously, we were most likely taught not to stare at people, but probably encouraged to stare at things. Garland-Thomson's work is focused on staring at other people, especially those with disabilities or those who appear different or unusual. I use he understanding of staring to help think through why we might like to stare at ruins.
[92]Garland-Thomson, 3.
[93]Ibid.
[94]Ibid., 13.

especially those with disabilities or those who appear different or unusual. I use her understanding of staring to help think through why we might like to stare at ruins.

Using Garland-Thomson's work in this way, I'm operating from a basic assumption, that a theory of staring at people is applicable in some way to a theory of why we like to look at ruin porn – that is, staring at things. Insofar as staring is defined as the pursuit of knowledge, staring appears to support a previous reason we like to look at ruin porn – to tell the ruin's story, provide a narrative. "[Staring] is a conduit to knowledge," Garland-Thomson explains; "stares are urgent efforts to make the unknown known, to render legible something that seems at first glance incomprehensible."[95] Brain imaging experiments show that when we experience novel situations, places, and people, dopamine, the body's chemical response to pleasure, is released. On a purely neurological basis, we desire and enjoy seeing the novel, even more so in photographic form, which seems poised as a fixed object and perspective, to elicit long stares. "Staring begins as an impulse," a desire to know what we are looking at when we encounter a person or thing that "embodies the unpredictable, strange, or disordered."[96] That impulse to know morphs into a curiosity and eventually reconciliation.

I mention Garland-Thomson's research on staring because I think it may be a reason we enjoy ruin porn. Images of ruins are unusual to us, perhaps illegible, and they invite the sort of storytelling that I've mentioned as an invitation to tell the ruins narrative. Garland-Thomson adds to that the neurological fact that when we come upon images of illegibility, we want to know, so we stare. Her work suggests that there may be a basic neurological impulse to stare at ruins. Further, in the process of our attempt to

[95]Garland-Thomson, 15.
[96]Ibid., 15, 49.

gather information, dopamine is released and we find the experience of ruin porn pleasurable.

Susan Sontag, Difficult Images

What is attractive about a gruesome image? Why do battlefield images sell newspapers and sponsor click-thrus on websites? When we pass an accident on the highway at which we're certain there must be a fatality – we see the white sheets covering the dead – why do we crane our necks? These questions caught the attention of Susan Sontag, author of *Regarding the Pain of Others*. In it, Sontag writes about the abundance of difficult images and the awkward beauty they often possess. Sontag never writes about ruins, per se, but her book asks questions relevant to this study, especially: Why do we like to look at gory or traumatic images? And, how can something so tragic be experienced as beautiful?

Sontag notes that "photography has kept company with death" since it's inception, the accompaniment coming to maturity during World War II, when the imagery produced by combat journalists, brought photojournalism to the fore of popular publications.[97] For the first time, images of war were publically circulated. Since then, a veritable glut of imagery has emerged from this vein of photography, and with it the concomitant issue of whether beauty is available as a modifier of these images. Can we say that images of dead people is beautiful? Sontag recognizes the taboo (and risks) of acknowledging beauty in war imagery, stating, "To find beauty in war photographs seems heartless. But the landscape of devastation is still a landscape. There is beauty in ruins."[98]

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[97]Sontag, 24.
[98]Ibid., 75-6.

Typically war images, for Americans at least, come from foreign lands and foreign people. They don't resonate as threats to our personal world; we won't be seeing any dead people that we know. The same can't be said about the events of September 11, 2001:

> To acknowledge the beauty of photographs of the World Trade Center ruins in the months following the attack seemed frivolous, sacrilegious. The most people dared say was that the photographs were "surreal," a hectic euphemism behind which the disgraced notion of beauty cowered. But they were beautiful, many of them—by veteran photographers such as Gilles Peress, Susan Meisala, and Joel Meyerowitz, among others. The site itself, the mass graveyard that had received the name "Ground Zero," was of course anything but beautiful. Photographs tend to transform, whatever their subject; and as an image something may be beautiful—or terrifying; or unbearable, or quite bearable—as it is not in real life.[99]

Sontag is saying that, yes, images of war may be beautiful even as war isn't beautiful. She also acknowledges that there is a built in bias toward using the term "beauty" to describe scenes that are closer to home, like 9/11. Rather, the term surreal stands in as a (typically acceptable) mixture of awe, beauty, and horror. The trouble Sontag recognizes is when the beauty of the image – which is *of course* not the event it references – transposes itself onto the event itself in the mind of the viewers. "Transforming is what art does," she writes, "but photography that bears witness to the calamitous and the reprehensible is much criticized if it seems 'aesthetic'; that is, too much like art."[100] An image of Ground Zero might appear beautiful in its surreal composition, but Ground Zero itself is not beautiful, she would argue. Similarly the over-abundance of beauty can be distracting, nay immoral, where it concerns images of tragedy.

So what about ruins? My takeaway from Sontag is the disconnect that exists in our experience of ruin and our experience of beauty. We naturally separate the two, and

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[99]Sontag, 76.
[100]Ibid.

she is wary of both that natural separation and the mindless collision of the two. At the same time, I hear Sontag saying, to effect: Look, sometimes horrible scenes appear beautiful in images; can we all stop ringing our hands about that?

Philosophical Reasons

We've already seen that the Romantic mind craved feeling, sensing, and inspiration; they had a penchant for reflecting on melancholy as a means toward greater connectedness with their world, and ruins offered a muse for doing so. This pursuit of melancholic reflection never quite leaves the West's intentions for appreciating ruins. Philosophically speaking, there are many reasons to explain the prevalence of ruin appreciation. Ruins function as symbols, allegories or vehicles for reflecting on: human finitude and mortality; existential angst, estrangement, and melancholy; time and nostalgia; and order.

Semiotics of Ruins

The West's fascination with ruins might be better understood as a fascination with that to which ruins provide access. One doesn't have to explore the scholarship on ruins to discover phrases like "ruins mean…" or "ruins represent…" or "the ruin is a cipher for…" or "ruins testify to…." We really don't care about the ruins in themselves; what we really care about is how ruins avail themselves to symbols, metaphors, and allegories for other aspects of our lives and our world.[101] As Brian Dillon begins his *Ruin Lust*:

> Consider what the ruin has meant, or might mean today: a reminder of the universal reality of collapse and rot; an ideal of beauty that is alluring exactly because of its flaws and failures; the symbol of a certain melancholic or

[101]There is a name for the person who cares about ruins qua ruins: archeologist.

> maundering state of mind; an image of equilibrium between nature and culture; a memorial to the fallen of an ancient or recent war; the very picture of economic hubris or industrial decline; a desolate playground in whose cracked and weed-infested precincts we have space and time to imagine a future.[102]

Notice how Dillon doesn't speak about ruins in and of themselves but what they "might mean," how they are a "reminder of…" or an "ideal of…" or the "symbol of…" or an "image of…" or a "memorial to…" or "the very picture of…" – ruins always point away from themselves. This pointing away is what I mean by the semiotics of ruins. Ruins are valuable for their ability to point to and facilitate discussions about time, space, economic policies, and the human condition, among a vast array of other topics.

In his 1963 *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin wrote, concerning a theory of Baroque allegory, "Allegories are, in the ream of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things."[103] He might as well have said, "Ruins are allegories." Both the ruin and the allegory "speak of a disruption in the relationship between form and meaning."[104] Architecture scholar Naomi Stead suggests that by emphasizing allegory, Benjamin's "goal was to revitalize allegory, to 'redeem' it, and thus redress criticisms that it was too mechanical, a mere 'technique', based on convention, suitable for illustrating 'concepts' but not 'ideas.'" Stead notes that allegory had been roundly criticized for "its 'failure to stabilize meaning', its sheer proliferation of readings in which any object was eventually capable of signifying any meaning.[105] Benjamin, however, appreciated the openness of allegory, emphasizing its ability to skirt a fixed

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[102]Dillon, *Ruin Lust*, 5.
[103]Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (New York: Verson, 1998), 178.
[104]Hell and Schönle, 7.
[105]Stead.

meaning especially as it can "provide a means to represent the frailty and finitude of human life. [106]

"Ruin" is defined by Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle as that which has "lost its function or meaning in the present, while retaining a suggestive, unstable semantic potential."[107] This unstable potential – this uncontrollable and irreducible meaning – is what attracts us to them; ruin meanings are "continually up for negotiation." [108] Ruins are fragments of previous wholes, and the ruin, in its fragmentary nature, "is more loaded with meaning than when it was part of a whole.[109] Ruins avail themselves to whatever we would wish them to represent, even as there are a consistent set of metaphors and symbols that recur. More than anything, our "attitudes to ruins and ruination reveal social and cultural values and commitments that become legible through the different narratives that ruins are asked to carry.[110]

Narrative

The emptiness of ruins is evocative, inviting. So we construct stories. Whether by experiencing ruins in person or through images, ruins petition us to tell their stories such that "each spectator is forced to supply the missing pieces from his or her own imagination."[111] "Ruins speak to us of the structures they once were, of the people who made them, of those who commanded them to be made, and of those who for a time made use of them," writes Michael Roth. "In their evocation of absence, they speak of

[106]See Stead.
[107]Hell and Schönle, 6.
[108]DeSilvey and Edensor, 471.
[109]Gilda Williams, "It Was What it Was," in Dillon, *Ruins*, 95.
[110]DeSilvey and Edensor, 467.
[111]Woodward, 15.

those who destroyed them or abandoned them or failed to protect them from the irresistible ravages of Time. In their present state, ruins speak of those who have tried to make sense of them, or have been drawn to represent them, or have used them as objects of memorialization.[112] Ruins are confrontational. Because they come to us as fragments, because we encounter them as places once designated for humans but found unpeopled, and for the sheer fact that they are ruined, we cannot help but to supply answers, reasons, and narratives.

Projection

These narratives say "more about the beholder than about the ruin or its original environment."[113] Ruins typically appear to us in the abstract, like Rorschach prints – their fragmentary imperfection is their invitation to us to project onto them the stories we wish them to tell. Our positionality in the world and in relation to the respective ruin, determines what we do and don't see (or experience) in a ruin. As DeSilvey and Edensor note:

> One person sees a derelict lot, another sees wildlife habitat. One sees a painful reminder of a colonial past, another sees affirmation of a glorious history. An artist sees abstract beauty while a resident sees painful abandonment. A squatter sees a home where a neighbor sees an eyesore.[114]

A single ruin can resemble at once: a derelict lot, a wildlife habitat, an earmark to colonialism, a monument, abstract beauty, a blight to the neighborhood, and a home. In this particular example, all of these semblances can be accurate at the same time, but ruins can also elicit opposite meanings.

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[112]Roth, Lyons, and Merewether, vii.
[113]Hell and Schönle, 7.
[114]DeSilvey and Edensor, 479.

As art critic Gilda Williams notes, "Ever since Italian Renaissance writers fantasized about reviving the glories of Ancient Rome evidenced in their grand and broken antiquities, ruins have been put to work for politico-cultural causes.[115] Ruins become pawns, for better or worse, in political, economic, and cultural wars, and not just to writers:

> To statesmen, ruins predict the fall of Empires, and to philosophers the futility of mortal man's aspirations. To a poet, the decay of a monument represents the dissolution of the individual ego in the flow of Time; to a painter or architect, the fragments of a stupendous antiquity call into question the purpose of their art.[116]

That said, when it comes to the random ruin porn image that flashes across the computer screen or Instagram feed, the anonymity of the ruin can present a different set of options.

Self

When an image of an anonymous ruin is presented to us, and when the image alone is presented, outside of context, one of our first instincts may be to invest ourselves in the image, to ask: What does this image say about me? About my life? About my circumstances, fears, needs? These questions may not live on the surface, but the implied invitation of the ruin, asking us to tell its story, is received. "Ruins are not only anthropomorphic but also anamorphic," writes Svetlana Boym; "in our imagination they morph into different shapes like clouds."[117] Like clear reflection pools, a ruin offers us a glimpse of our (projected) selves.

Even when a ruin's history is known, or, for the sake of example, every iota of its history is known – even then, a ruin's solitariness "invites a comparison with ourselves,"

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[115]Gilda Williams, 3.
[116]Woodward, 2-3.
[117]Boym, 83.

writes psychoanalyst Adrian Leader.[118] He continues: "The solitary and ineffable structures evoke our own identity, or at least that part of it which remains mute and alone. [Ruins] become an echo of our own out-of-placeness with the world, that side of human life which consists of brute, meaningless presence."[119] What I've been calling an "invitation" from the ruin – the invitation to tell its story – is an effect of the ruins fragmentary nature, solitude, history, and silence. But it's also caused by the estrangement of our being human;

Finitude, Narcissism, Affect

I presume an existentialist understanding of the human condition: finitude.[120] From birth we are dying and nothing is more present to our awareness than our own mortality, frailty, and the limitations forced on us by time and space. We will one day die and the knowledge of this undergirds all aspects of our being, imbuing us with existential angst: disenchantment, estrangement, and melancholy. We fear our death and mourn with nostalgia our estranged homelessness in the world. We may not be fully aware, but these concerns are with us, through all our decisions and experiences. This is how Diderot could say:

> Wherever I cast my glance, the objects surrounding me announce death and compel my resignation to what awaits me. What is my ephemeral existence in comparison with that of a rock being worn down, of a valley being formed, of a forest that's dying, of these deteriorating masses suspended above my head? I see the marble tombs crumble into powder, and I don't want to die![121]

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[118]Adrian Leader, "The Architecture of Life, in *Ruins: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Brian Dillon (London Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2011), 121.
[119]Ibid.
[120]I presume a Tillichian existentialist anthropology as proposed by Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*.
[121]Denis Diderot, *Salons*, ed. J. Selznec (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963): 228–9, quoted in Roth, 1997: 59.

Diderot sees a ruin and immediately connects it to his own ruin, his mortality. As Woodward puts it, "When we contemplate ruins, we contemplate our own future."[122] Our connection to ruins, and the reason that they can attract us so is that they seem to stand outside of time, both in the past and in the future, while at the same time both bringing pieces of the past with them, and predicting possible futures, even our own, especially our own death.

Time

One of the most apparent and persistent markers of ruins is time. A ruin "maligns time, dissolving boundaries between past and present. The question is not *where* the ruin is located, but *when*? Not in the present, but neither in the past."[123] In its persistence, the ruin also points to the future. Ruins are pan-temporal in this way. Their "decidedly polymorphous" temporality is a requirement.[124] A place that "could provide full access to the past would no longer be a ruin since it would have lost nothing over time. But a site that carried with it nothing of the past would no longer seem a ruin."[125] The evidence of age, change, and a history – of time – unavoidably conjures, that is, presents the past. A ruin's necessary connection to and proxy for the past is defining characteristic, such that, "in the ruin," wrote Benjamin, "history has physically merged into the setting."[126] For Benjamin, the ruin is the material presence of time; ruins materialize time.

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[122]Woodward, 2.
[123]Dylan Trigg, "The Psychoanalysis of Ruins," *3:AM Magazine*, December 9, 2012, accessed May 5, 2015, http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/the-psychoanalysis-of-ruins/.
[124]Trigg, *The Memory of Place*, 268.
[125]Roth, Lyons, and Merewether, 8–9.
[126]Benjamin, 177-78.

Ruins also present the future. Dillon notes that during the initial ruin lust of the 18th century was preoccupied with "thinking about – fearing and hoping for – the future."[127] When we experience a ruin, we witness its strength and persistence, even as we notice its frailty. But it is its strength that wins out, its still-being-here-ness, even as we are readily aware that while it seems to be suffering a long slow and stalwart death, it could nevertheless come down at any given time. Its future is uncertain. Insofar as "the ruin traffics with more than one timeframe," conjuring the past, experienced in the present, pointing toward the future, Dillon adds, "it stands as a warning for our own futures (…) and most unsettlingly perhaps it conjures a future past, the memory of what might have been.[128] Here again is a defining characteristic of the ruin: "the ruins of modernity point to possible futures that never came to be."[129] Ruins raise questions about their own future, they display their own past's future, today, and in spanning these temporalities – what Dillon refers to as their "retro-futurist aspect" – they invite us to consider our own futures and our past's possible futures that never came to be.[130] And, they invite us to consider the future ruins of the inhabited buildings of today.[131]

We like to look at ruins and especially ruin porn because "it allows us to perceive the passage of time as irresistible."[132] Few other quotidian environments so readily allow for the contemplation of time great breadth. Especially in our apocalyptically aware age, an age when war or ecological disaster could end it all, depictions of ruins, especially

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[127]Dillon, *Ruin Lust*, 48.
[128]Ibid.
[129]Boym, 59.
[130]Dillon, *Ruin Lust,* 48.
[131]German architect, Albert Speer, working from his theory of 'ruin value,' designed buildings with their future ruined state in mind, aiming for that ruined state to be as elegant and regal as possible, stalwart emblems of a golden age. Speer was Hitler's architect, and Hitler wanted the distant future of Berlin, long past the reign of the Third Reich, to stand as Rome does today. Hitler's buildings were to be built for eternity. See Cairns and Jacobs, 174.
[132]Roth, Lyons, and Merewether, 2.

ruin porn, come to us as warnings from the past, "[haunting] a present unsure if there will be a future" at all.[133] "The ruin casts us forward in time," predicting a future "in which our present will slump into similar disrepair or fall victim to some unforeseeable calamity."[134] In the very least, ruins remind us "that not only architecture, but all cultural and social aspirations" succumb to impermanence, regardless of whether the illusion says otherwise.[135]

We can't help but to find ruins irresistible. We can't help but to be caught up in their temporal insecurity. They're ghosts and prophets all at once and depending on our position in the world, we will experience them as harbingers of the past, fragments of the present, or warnings of the future. In our finitude, in our slow race toward death, our mortality is never far from mind, if even buried beneath the minutia of our daily lives. The ruin is a "screen on which modernity projects its asynchronous temporalities and its fear of and obsession with the passing of time."[136]

The ruin presents time's passing in a way that is disconnected from us physically, "an historic an aesthetic distance that promotes a contemplative nostalgia for a 'better' past, while simultaneously legitimizing a present that looks forward to a visionary future.[137]

This may account for why ruin porn images captivate us; they "embody anxieties about human aging."[138] Ruins have "a patina of intense nostalgia" and can conjure our own past, our culture's past, and they project us into the future.[139] They "make us think

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[133]Dillon, *Ruin Lust*, 48.
[134]Dillon, "Introduction," 11.
[135]Stead.
[136]Huyssen, 52.
[137]Magali Arriola, "A Victim and a Viewer: Some Thoughts on Anticipated Ruins," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 12 (Autumn/Winter 2005): 174.
[138]Boym, 59.
[139]Ibid. Boym believes that "the ruin gaze is colored by nostalgia," which she describes as: "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. The objects of nostalgia, home or *nostos*, is forever

of the past that could have been the future that never took place, tantalizing us with utopian dreams of escaping the irreversibility of time."[140] In the ruin are both the inevitable dread of the future (death) and the open potential of the future (possibility). The slate is clean for us to write a story for the ruin, for our culture, and for ourselves that best suites our needs. Though we are encumbered with time, dragged down by our own mortality, the stage is always set for an open, undetermined future.

Affect

I can recall feelings of affinity with the Briarcliff campus when I first explored the mansion and outlying buildings. That's an odd thing to say, that I experienced a palpable relationship with a building, that I felt in-tune with, connected to, affected by a derelict and abandoned place to which I had never been before and like which I had never experienced. Briarcliff didn't recall a setting from my youth or a memory of a movie scene; it was brand new to me. And yet, I remember feeling calm, at home, like I belonged there. I can't say if this was the result of having a camera around my neck and primarily experiencing this place *with* my camera, but I can say confidently that I felt something there.

The feeling is what kept my attention and eventually led to this dissertation. Joel Meyerowitz, photographer and author of *Creating a Sense of Place*, explained his own experience of realizing there is a connection between the photographer and the photographer's place. He writes, "There is a dawning awareness that you feel good in this

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elusive; we are acutely aware of our loss of home but not sure if the return will cure us or only aggravate the symptoms. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy." (Boym, 83.)

[140]Boym, 58.

place. Something here makes you attentive, brings you to an awakened state."[141] Your heart rate feels as though it's racing and slowing at the same time, like a caffeine high the produces both heightened awareness and energy, but with a stillness that makes the experience pensive; or, that was my experience. "Bells go off that are precisely your bells," Meyerowtiz explains.

> You are aligned with the inner coordinates of your being, and you suddenly feel in the right place. It may be the slant of the light, it may be even the smell, something not visible; you may feel yourself rooted to the spot where suddenly there's a smell of salt water mixed with roses, and it's got your number. At that moment you know, "I'm alive. Here, now." And what's there? Whatever you make of it. Sometimes it's ephemeral and nonviable. Ordinary.[142]

Curious to me is Meyerowitz's realization that this feeling, this sense could be reduced to or resulting from a particular smell or a particular glance of the light, something small – tiny surprises, tiny beauties, tiny wonders. It's enough to stop him in his tracks, like a "current of energy": "Whoa, something is here. What is here?"[143] The response to that question is the snap of the shutter and further exploration.

Meyerowitz is predominantly a street photographer, in the tradition of Cartier-Bresson and Frank. He's the type of photographer who might pass by something of pristine construction or beauty to study something curious, asymmetrical, or rhyming in a visually odd way. "The smallest thing," he writes, "can be the lever that lifts the

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[141]Joel Meyerotiz, ASX Interview by Constance Sullivan, *Creating a Sense of Place*, New York: Smithsonian Institute, 1990, accessed April 24, 2015.
[142]Meyerowitz.
[143]Meyerowtiz. In full: "I don't mean to be mystical, but I feel there is a current of energy in a field that I enter, and when I hit that space I say, "Whoa, something is here. What is here?" The first thing that's there is me. So now I find an opportunity to put the camera down and see what it is that's defining me. And every time I do that I make a picture that has some special meaning to me. When I look at them afterwards, I know I was in the right place and the right time. And I use that measure to allow it to come into being, to stop myself from pushing through it. Because the easiest thing is to be blind, and to keep right on rolling until you get to someplace that's a familiar, observable reality. But this is not an observable reality; it's a sensory reality. I trust that now, more than any other form of approach."

significant moment from the broad generalizations of reality."[144] As a street photographer, his penchant is to wander, to be available to these moments that he describes, where the sense of a particular place consumes him. Echoing Meyerowitz, fellow photographer William Christenberry, who is know for his place-based work in the South, once said, "My stance is very subjective," adding:[145]

> The place is so much a part of me. I can't escape it and have no desire to escape it. I continue to come to grips with it. I don't want my work to be thought of as maudlin or overly sentimental. It's not. It's a love affair – a lifetime of involvement with a place. The place is my muse.[146]

Like Meyerowitz, Christenberry remains receptive to his environment and tries to be responsive to place and his feelings as they are inspired by place.

I believe the sense of wonder/wander that might characterize the work of Meyerowitz and Christenberry, is a characteristic that ruins invite, perhaps as a part of the prompt to create a narrative. Their open spaces, echoes, and unseen pathways invite the explorer to wander. "The material quality of ruins," write DeSlivey and Edensor, "afford particular sensual and affective experiences."[147] This is why there is a whole class of "urban explorers" who are often the photographers behind ruin porn. For many of them, it is the inspiration of being in a particular place, of experience the odd materiality of ruins, that prompts the making of photographs.[148] But the question here is whether or

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[144]Once More Around the Sun, "May 21, 2015," May 22, 2015, accessed April 24, 2015. http://oncemorearoundthesun.com/2015/05/22/may-21-2015/.
[145]Robert Hirsch, "The Muse of Place and Time: An Interview with William Christenberry, by of Light Research," *Afterimage Magazine*, November/December 2005.
[146]Hirsch.
[147]DeSilvey and Edensor, 480.
[148]See Cairns and Jacobs, 182-3: "Whole subcultures of urban explorers are developing an alternative aesthetics based on direct engagement with decaying urban and quasi-urban terrains, with their own specialist subdivisions such as the bunkerologist, the place hacker, and the psychogeographer. Unlike the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecssors, urban explorers are not simply contemplating the ruin at a distance as an architectural artifact within a picturesque landscape composition, or using it as a template for the architectures they create. These new ruinologists do not care for ruins sanctioned by good taste or compositional principles. They seek out the unloved and unremarked, the forgotten and derelict buildings.

how that affective quality travels with the images. Do we as viewers of ruin porn also feel an affective connection in the images?

I do believe the images they make produce the same desire to wander/wonder – like narcissus in search of a clear pool, whether we realize it or not, we look for ourselves in this images. Ruins are an odd type of place in which order, space, and time are unordered and out of order. That disorientation can be alluring in and of itself. As Hell and Schonle note, "Ruins emancipate our senses and desires and enable introspection."[149] In fact, an influential subset of ruin research is the study of how the researcher's body serves as an instrument of data collection and research.[150] This, of course, returns to the research of ruins themselves, not necessarily the images of ruins, but I believe this affective quality carries over.

This project is not one of sociological or psychological experimentation or surveys. Rather, because very little scholarship has been dedicated to the study of ruin porn, this work is necessarily experimental and anecdotal. The goal is not necessarily to name *the* formula that makes ruin porn alluring, but to be suggestive. I propose several possibilities – as many as I can name with conviction – and give a general sense of why these images are successful. Toward that end, I think it is important to account for the research that has been done on the experience of physically interacting with ruins, which is why I have let that material inform previous sections of this chapter. Of course, I recognize that there is a big difference between experiencing a place or event and

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They break into, trespass, explore, photograph, video and sound record. They report on buildings' atmospheres and specters, their dangers and challenges, their atrophies and inertias, on blogs, in the occasional exhibition, and in books."

[149]Hell and Schönle, 8.

[150]See DeSilvey and Edensor, 172. Describing one scholars work on Oxford Ness, the authors explain how she "describes the host of thoughts, impressions and sensations that she experienced as she moved through the ruined techno-military landscape. In such places, the researcher's own body becomes an instrument for sensing haptic and sensual aspects of past practice."

experiencing a photograph of a place or event. But, again, as I've said, there is significantly less research on the allure of ruin photography while there is a burgeoning abundance for the allure of ruins themselves. So I hope to use that research suggestively.

Affect, Sense, Feeling

One scholar who has already appeared many times in this dissertation and who is at the front of the pack of scholars writing about post-industrial ruins is Tim Edensor of Manchester Metropolitan University. In his 2007 *Sense and Society* article, "Sensing the Ruin," Edensor was among the first (of this wave) of scholars to write about the affective qualities of the ruin. Edensor's attention is mostly directed toward ruins in the UK, and like this study, his work is focused on the post-industrial ruins of the late 20th century. Edensor's writing is important because he writes about the *experience* of ruins, a topic that becomes hard to quantify or standardize.[151]

Place may be defined as the human experience of space. That experience is squarely figured in the various geographical sub-disciplines that explore the meaning of place. There is, of course, a great deal of scholarship on how "we experience place in an *affective* way."[152] For, as Dylan Trigg reminds us, "Our bodies orient us in place, and in

[151]In fact, he goes on for pages describing his experience. In part: "In the ruin there are numerous objects and forms of matter that the eye cannot identify, that appear unclassifiable, partly because of their transformation under conditions of decay and partly because of (my) unfamiliarity with industrial processes. Objects wrought out of strange material, off-cuts and residues, parts never assembled and other enigmatic artifacts litter ruined scenes. Thus, shards of metal, things twisted into peculiar shapes, dead animals, matter and fixtures released from their usual confinement contravene the usual visual order and attune the eye to an emergent aesthetics, one that cannot be fixed through endless maintenance but is constantly becoming different. See Tim Edensor, "Sensing the Ruin," *The Sense and Society* 2, no. 2 (2007): 223.

[152]Trigg, *The Memory of Place*, 6.

doing so become the primary source of how we apprehend a given environment."[153] But the same sort of research, focused specifically on ruins, is not as extant.

Edensor's article has been very helpful to me as I think through what's happening in our bodies when we experience ruins. While reading his article, it reminded me of the first time I walked through Briarcliff. And I wonder: Is the experience of viewing ruin porn connected to this in some way.

"A sensuous engagement," suggests Edensor, "is part of the way in which people make and inhabit space."[154] However, "regulatory procedures, planning, cultural conventions and values, and spatial divisions," in our current urban context discourage and de-emphasize sensually engaging with the built environment.[155] Ruins are different. We've already discussed how the visual appeal of ruins invites engagement, but there are also smells of dust, mildew, or dirt, and the texture of decay creates an awareness of touch.[156] In fact, there is an implied awareness that "these items are available to pick up, to stroke and throw, to smash or pull apart."[157] This is one of the attractions for young people and urban explorers to trespass over fences and through broken entrances – in the ruin, there is no immediate consequence for breaking a window, throwing a stone, or taking a small artifact. The laws of society cease, to some degree, creating an order that is different and non-conforming. Edensor explains:

> …the ruin is a space in which things can be engaged with, destroyed and strewn around expressively in contradistinction to interaction with things in regulated realms where, typically, vision predominates, objects are beheld at a distance, and a disposition is required whereby commodities and other forms of material

[153]Trigg, The Memory of Place, 6.
[154] Edensor, 230.
[155]Ibid.
[156]"The spatial recontextualization and condition of objects in ruins draws attention to their material qualities, making evident the matter out of which they are made and foregrounding the sensuous work that was involved in their manufacture and use." (Edensor, 226.)
[157]Edensor, 227.

> property are sacrosanct and may not be meddled with. In the ruin, there is no price to pay for destroying things that have already been consigned to the category of waste and belong to nobody.[158]

The experience of the ruin is a bit of a paradox, then, in which, in all likelihood one is trespassing and thus breaking the law; however, at the same time, the space is one outside the law. So there is a sense of anxious freedom – I can do whatever I want here…but security could be by any minute.

That anxious freedom is perhaps a clever way to speak about taboo. The point that Edensor wishes to make here is that there is a freedom (of the senses) that can accompany one in ruins.

> In derelict spaces the body is generally liberated from the usual self-conscious performative constraints of the city and may move in a non-linear, improvisatory fashion across a variety of textures, comport and weave the body in expressive ways, confront powerfully unpleasant but also pleasurable and surprising smells and sounds, and behold sights which disrupt normative urban aesthetic conventions.[159]

Part of Edensor's project is to offer the experience of the ruin as a corrective to the constraints of urban life and as a critique of the political and economic treatment of the post-industrial landscape. Edensor identifies in the ruin a sort of *heterotopia*.

Heterotopias

Michel Foucault coined the term *heterotopia* to describe other-places in society in which norms of behavior are suspended, access is restructured, but the larger society as a whole is reflected, but like a funhouse mirror. These places may be privileged, sacred, or forbidden locations, or they may be communities of deviation (psychiatric hospital, prison, nursing home). Heterotopias can be one place that is a mixture of many places,

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[158]Edendsor, 229.
[159]Ibid., 217.

like a zoo or theme park, or one place that is a mixture of many times, like a library or museum. Heterotopies require special access or privilege to enter, which is often associate with ritual. Heterotopias reflect society but stand outside society. Foucault wrote:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there.[160]

Edensor does not engage with Foucault's idea of the *heterotopia*, but they're on the same page about these places being sites of alterity that function as fun house mirrors of our own society – "fun house" because through the experience of the ruin, society's urban experience and economic policies, for example, are brought into view as *other*. The ruin is a space to critique society.

While the critical element is important to Edensor, the meat and potatoes of his argument is that scholarship about ruins is incomplete if we don't talk anecdotally and empirically about the sensual experience of the ruin. Central to this argument is the suggestion that among the most readily available ways to study ruins is to study our own

[160]Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias and Utopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 24.

body's response to them. This is, of course, built on the supposition that the body has a specific reaction to the ruin. Happening both on and beneath the surface, ruins offer sights, smells, sounds, and tactile experiences that invite our engagement. Their ruin-ness is alluring to us, and we are likely to feel something there. An image of a ruin is very different from the sensual experience of visiting a ruin. Still, I suggest that the visual element – decay, emptiness, abandonment, strewn objects, dereliction – functions as a sort of invitation, less so than the physical space would, but engaging none the less.

Photographs are Ruins

One reason that I haven't explored in great depth just yet, but one that I think is important is the photographic nature of ruin porn. Why is ruin porn a decidedly photographic phenomenon; what does the photographic medium offer (to ruins and us) that no other medium offers?

In his *Words of Light*, Eduardo Cadava theorizes photography through the writings of Walter Benjamin. In a section about the role of allegory in Benjamin's thought, Cadava writes, somewhat dismissively and without further elucidation, "the photograph is itself a ruin…"[161] Cadava (and Benjamin) are specifically referring to the relationship between the allegory and the ruin.[162] For Benjamin the best definition of a ruin is "allegory," which of course appeals to thoughts in this chapter about the semiotics of ruins.

My hunch is that the relationship between the ruin and the photograph is much more essential. That might not be an empirically verifiable reason for why ruin porn is

[161]Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 23.
[162]Benjamin, 178.

pleasurable, but it does explain why this is a decidedly photographic phenomenon. In other words, to the question "Why are ruin porn photographs pleasurable?" I'm replying, "Because they are photographs."

Photographs are ruins, literally and analogically. How are ruins and photographs alike? More specifically, how are photographs like ruins? The answer to that question will conjure statements I've already made about ruins while briefly introducing some well-worn roads through photographic theory. In particular, the connection between photographs and ruins happen on a few themes: absence/presence, life/death, past/present, space, and the fragment.

Ruin, Absence, Abjection, and Death Mark Every Image

What appears overly pedantic to mention gets at the heart of the study at hand: a photograph and its referent in the world are *not* ontologically one. In his *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, Eduardo Cadava takes us to the heart of the ontological problem that riddles every photograph:

> The incunabula of photography—its beginnings, its childhood, but also its burial place, its funeral plot, its relation to printing and inscription—flashes the truth of the photo. This truth says, if it can say anything, that what structures the relationship between the photographic image and any particular referent, between the photograph and the photographed, is the absence of relation, what Benjamin calls—referring to what, in Eugene Atget's photographs of deserted streets in Paris, anticipates surrealist photography—"a salutary estrangement between man and his surroundings" (OWS 251/ GS 2:379). This is why, he explains, "it would be a misreading of the incunabula of photography to emphasize their 'artistic perfection'" (248/376). Rather than responding, faithfully and perfectly, the photographed as such, the photographic image conjures up its death.[163]

[163]Cadava, 7.

Working through Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street, and Other Writings* and his *Gesammelte Schriften*, Cadava joins the crowd of scholars who locate absence and death in every photograph.

Susan Sontag, who learned from Roland Barthes, suggests that "ever since cameras were invented in 1839, photography has kept company with death."[164] Cadava, claiming that the birth of photography is the grave, argues that the destiny of every photograph is death, as if the time in which the shutter remained open was the beginning, middle, and end of the photograph's life as event in the world. But, of course, the argument is much more significant. 'The absence of relation' between 'the photograph and the photographed' is what 'structures the relationship between the photographic image and any particular referent.'

The second the shutter is opened, something is simultaneously lost and gained. And that loss is what Cadava (and others: Barthes, Sontag) means by 'death'—"That the photograph is always touched by death means that it offers us a glimpse of a history to which we no longer belong."[165] So too for the ruin – it is always touched by death and offers us a glimpse of a history to which we no longer belong. For this reason, whenever we look at a scene in a photograph or when we encounter a ruin we are "[returning] to the event of its death," doubly so when we encounter a photograph of a ruin.[166] "Read against the grain of a certain faith in the mimetic capacity of photography," Cadava continues, "the photographic event reproduces, according to its own faithful and rigorous

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[164]Sontag, 24. She adds, "Because an image produced with a camera is, literally, a trace of something brought before the lens, photographs were superior to any painting as memento of the vanished past and the dear departed." Photographs allowed for a seemingly surreal visual afterlife for the departed, depicting dead people alive, and she will also argue, following Barthes, that every photograph of a living person is a picture of dead person who is still living.
[165]Cadava, xxviii.
[166]Ibid.

deathbringing manner, the posthumous character of our lived experience. The home of the photographed is the cemetery."[167] In a photograph we see the afterlife of experience—"a history of ghosts and shadows," hauntings and ruins.[168] Every photograph is a scene of abandonment, abjection, and absence; ontologically speaking it is unavoidably so. Every photograph is a ruin.

Cadava marks this absence, this "withdrawal of what is photographed"—"the conjunction of death and the photographed"—as "the very principle of photographic certitude."[169] As a "small funerary moment," the "photograph [is] most faithful to the event of the photograph"—Kracauer would say 'is most faithful to the *medium* of photography'—when it "is the least faithful one, the least mimetic one—the photograph that remains faithful to its own infidelity" to represent.[170] A photograph is at its best when it "*is* the dislocation, from within, of the possibility of reflection," representation, mimesis.[171] This is why "the image can only come into existence by a severance," just as a ruin can only come into existence by fragmentation and absence.[172]

The alternative to this conundrum for Cadava is to give up on original 'presence' and invest in the metaphor of translation. "The task of translation is not to render a foreign language into one we may call our own," explains Cadava, "but rather to preserve the foreignness of this language."[173] Fidelity in translation comes not by the attempt to copy, reproduce, mimic, or preserve the original but by departing from it, by using the faculty of another language to give an alternate picture. "The original lives beyond its

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[167]Ibid., 7-8.
[168]Ibid., 10.
[169]Ibid., 10.
[170]Ibid., 15.
[171]Ibid.
[172]Max Kozloff, "The Privileged Eye," in Multiple Views, ed. Daniel P. Younger (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 13.
[173]Cadava, 17.

own death in translation just as the photographed survives its own mortification in a photography."[174] In both cases, the so-called 'original' leaves traces of recognition in the 'translation' but the severance has been indelibly incised. For the photograph, this means that "the medium of likeness, speaks only what is unlike."[175] The power of the photograph is not its capacity to make present what it photographs but "its character as a force of interpretation."[176]

Photographs do not imply their own meanings; rather they "merely record the way *they* have ingested light" as orchestrated by the photographer.[177] "The idea that [photographs] tell us something is perhaps an understandable but still elementary mistake," writes Kozloff.[178] Photographs require decoding, because "what we see literally in a *photograph*…lacks…an *informing* code."[179] He continues:

> Beyond stating that it registers the light that came into the film, I cannot say that this oblivious, machine-fabricated image represents anything—however legible of even highly meaningful its contents might be.[180] There is no argument to the picture. *By itself*, it cannot stand for anything or speak on behalf of or against what it depicts. The subject is helplessly there, presented merely, and replete with its own momentary appearance.[181]

It is the work of textual accompaniment, venue of publication or exhibition, and sequencing which begin to graft meaning onto a photograph, and this is so even when it seems that "the photograph always carries its referent with itself."[182]

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[174]Cadava, 18.
[175]Ibid., 15.
[176]Ibid., xxviii.
[177]Max Kozloff, *Lone Visions, Crowded Frames: Essays on Photography* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 282.
[178]Ibid., 243.
[179]Ibid., 238.
[180]He adds elsewhere "Whatever else they are, I'm pretty sure that photographs are *not*, inherently, representations," because "within the brief, senseless moment of light exposure, any representational *aim*, as we know it, is annihilated." (*Lone Visions*, 237, 38.)
[181]Kozloff, *Lone Visions*, 238.
[182]Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5.

The same goes for ruins; they typically exist outside of context. Ruins do not usually show up with a placard that explains their original or current context; it's part of the allure of the ruin, their unknown context. A ruin is most successfully a ruin when the experience of that ruin has me asking, "What is this place? What happened here?" And insofar as ruins don't supply their own context, their inherent silence on the matter invites us to fill in the blanks. This is what I've referred to as the invitation to tell the ruin's story.

Photographs also exist apart from context, which is why Barthes referred to the found (domestic) photograph as among the most melancholic – here is a photo of a lost anonymous family with no one to enjoy or appreciate or remember; they're all probably dead too. Any antique photograph of a family that is separated from that family invites the same sort of storytelling that the ruin does: Who are these people; what is their story? The lack of context inherent to ruins and the lack of context inherent to photographs makes ruin porn a very unsuccessful medium for conveying context. And this is why ruin porn is criticized for overlooking context; a photograph of a ruin is inherently anonymous, devoid of a contextual platform to present any sort of argument, defense, or justification. Ruin porn is doubly non-contextual.

Both photographs and ruins operate on the assumption of absence. A photograph is always referencing an absent moment and space, and a ruin is as ruin *because* the fullness of its origin is missing – it is a fragment. A ruin is most successfully a ruin when that which is absent is perceived as a presence, an present absence. Meaning: for a ruin to be a ruin it must conjure its fullness, it must refer to its origin, and it must evince the absence of that full origin.

In a point that could just as easily refer to photography, Andreas Huyssen writes about present absence paradox and how that visible invisibility reflects time:

> Ruins seem to guarantee origins. They promise authenticity, immediacy and authority. However, this is a paradox. In the case of ruins, what is allegedly present and transparent whenever authenticity is claimed is present only as an absence. It is the imagined present of a past that can now be grasped only in its decay. Any ruin posits the problem of a double exposure of the past and the present.[183]

This retrospect is what Barthes identified as the built-in melancholy of all photographs. Ruins, like photographs, are inherently retrospective. In both a photograph and a ruin the past is made evident in the present and yet the past remains forever unattainable, fixed in a stagnant moment of death. Further, the only access to the past – which really isn't access but the illusion of access – is *only* through the present absence, both for the photograph and the ruin. The photograph is a ruin because, through its own present absence, it retrospectively points to its original referent.

Why Do We Like to Look at Ruin Porn?

Why do we like to look at ruin porn? We're all different of course, each with our own desires. What I've tried to show here are the myriad reasons why ruins by themselves and images of ruins are alluring. I cannot know why a particular image or ruin would be enjoyable to a particular person. I do not know why some people are drawn to certain photos while others aren't. What I've tried to think about in this chapter are the possible reasons why ruin porn, on the whole, is an attractive genre of photography. The list of reasons has included the visual and cultural effects of 9/11 and the Great Recession; the apparent invitation from ruins requesting that we tell their story;

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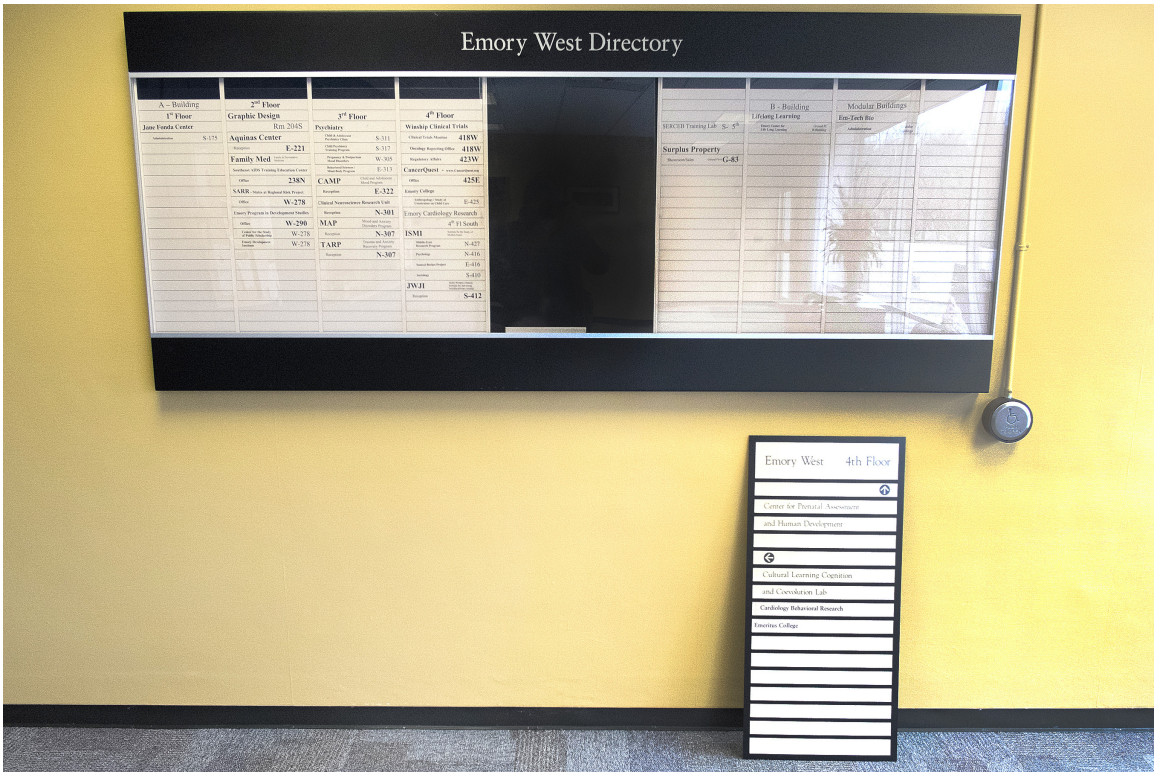
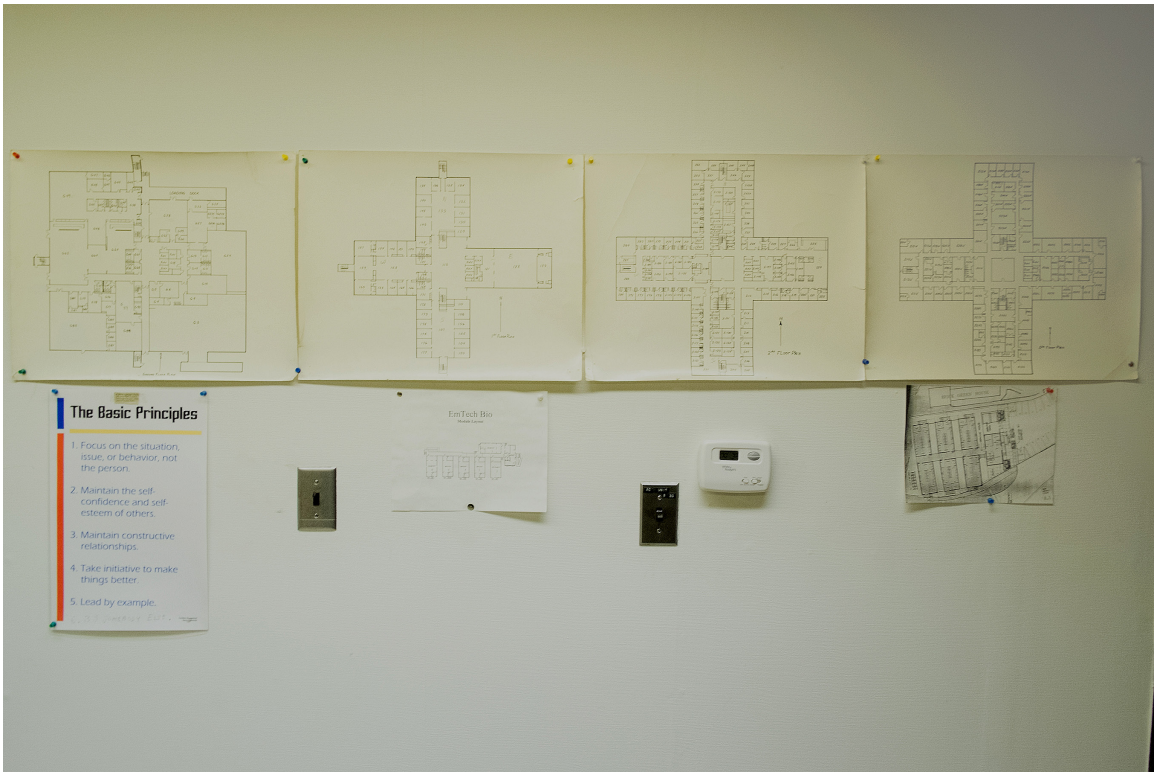
[183]Huyssen, 53.

the ways in which ruins invite reflection on the self, time, and space; multiple sociological, psychological, and neurological reasons; and the way in which the silence of ruins (and everything else listed here) enshrines ruins as open symbols. As with other cultural phenomena that rise to prominence, the ultimate reason for ruin porn's success lies somewhere in between.

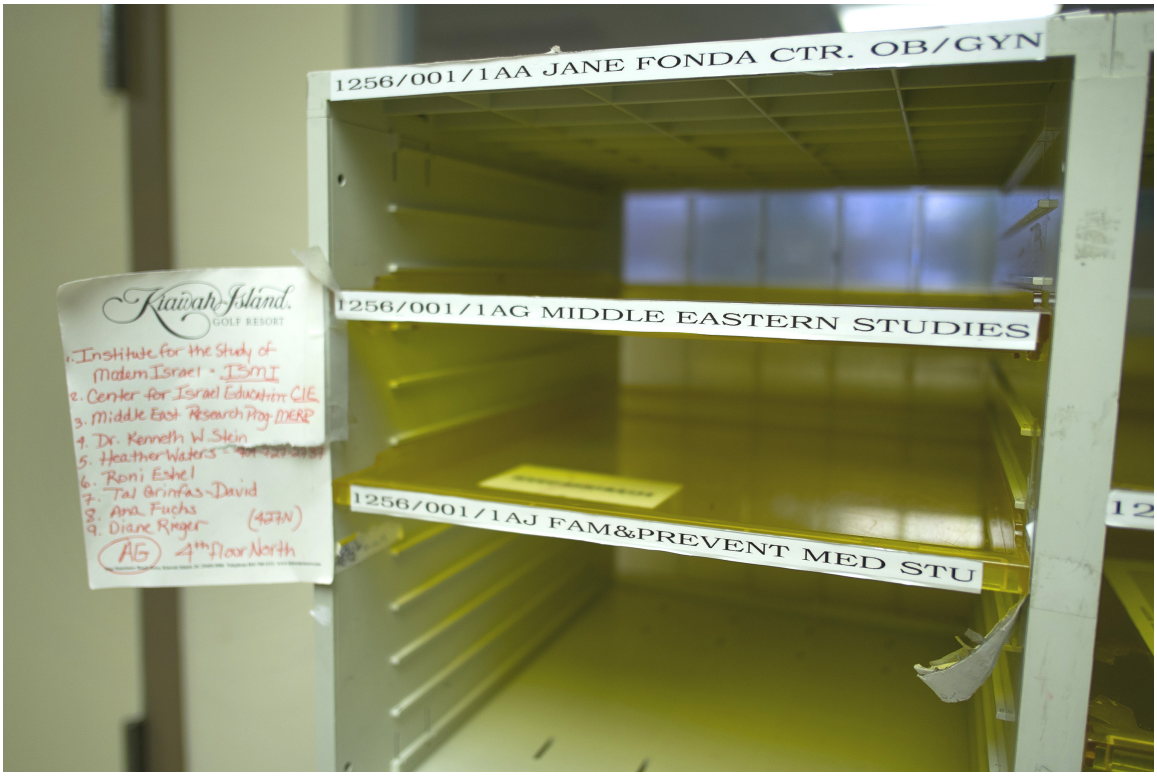

Emory West Directory
A – Building
1st Floor
Jane Fonda Center
2nd Floor
Graphic Design
Rm 204S
Aquinas Center
E-221
Family Med
238N
W-278
W-290
3rd Floor
Psychiatry
S-311
S-317
W-305
E-313
CAMP
E-322
N-301
MAP
N-307
TARP
4th Floor
Winship Clinical Trials
418W
423W
CancerQuest
425E
E-425
Emory Cardiology Research
4th / 11 South
ISMI
N-427
N-416
E-416
S-410
JWJI
S-412
B - Building
Lifelong Learning
Modular Buildings
Em-Tech Bio
Surplus Property
G-83
Emory West
4th Floor
Center for Prenatal Assessment
and Human Development
Cultural Learning Cognition
and Coevolution Lab
Cardiology Behavioral Research
Emeritus College


The Basic Principles
1. Focus on the situation, issue, or behavior, not the person.
2. Maintain the self-confidence and self-esteem of others.
3. Maintain constructive relationships.
4. Take initiative to make things better.
5. Lead by example.
EmTech Bio


EVACUATION PANEL
RESET
A BUILDING EVACUATION
B BUILDING EVACUATION
C-1 COTTAGE EVACUATION
C-2 COTTAGE EVACUATION
C-3 COTTAGE EVACUATION
C-4 COTTAGE EVACUATION
C-5 COTTAGE EVACUATION
C-6 COTTAGE EVACUATION
C-7 COTTAGE EVACUATION
ALL BUILDING EVACUATION


UNITED STATES
STAL SERVICE


1256/001/1AV CHILD DEV/HUMAN GENETICS
1256/001/1AW WEIS LAB
1256/001/1AY EMORY BIOTECH


1256/001/1AA JANE FONDA CTR. OB/GYN
1256/001/1AG MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
1256/001/1AJ FAM&PREVENT MED STU
Kiawah Island
GOLF RESORT
1. Institute for the Study of Modern Israel - ISMI
2. Center for Israel Education CIE
3. Middle East Research Prog MERP
4. Dr. Kenneth W. Stein
5. Heather Waters
6. Roni Eshel
7. Tal Grinfas-David
8. Ana Fuchs
9. Diane Rieger (437N)
AG 4th floor North


WARNING
Antenna
May Be Active
WARNING
THIS DOOR MUST
BE LOCKED
DO NOT PROP
DOOR OPEN FOR
ANY REASON
Master
NOTICE
RF SAFETY PROGRAM
IN EFFECT AT THIS SITE
GUIDELINES:
ONLY AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL MAY ENTER this site.
Obey all posted signs.
Assume all antennas are active, unless LOCKED OUT.
Before working on antennas, notify owners and DISABLE APPROPRIATE TRANSMITTERS.
Maintain a safe distance from all antennas.
Do not stop or work in front of active antennas.
USE personal RF MONITORS while working at this site.
Replace all transmitter shields after service.
Do not mount or use antennas in equipment rooms.
NOTICE
Beyond This Point:
You are entering a RADIO FREQUENCY (RF) EMISSIONS CONTROLLED AREA. RF EMISSIONS may exceed FCC Uncontrolled/General Population exposure limits.
Follow all FCC/OSHA guidelines for working in RF environments.


FIRE
FIRE
FLASHING LIGHT
MEANS CLEAN AGENT
HAS DISCHARGED
ON
OFF
NO
TRESPASSING
KEEP OUT
verizonwireless
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY
CALL: 1-800-852-2671
WARNING
HARD HAT
AREA
SITE DESIGNATION:
CAUTION
ROOM PROTECTED
BY CLEAN AGENT
EMERGENCY
UPON ENTRY
INTO SITE EVERYONE
WILL CALL N.O.C.C.
1-800-852-2671 AND
MAKE LOG ENTRY IN
SITE LOGBOOK.
NO EXCEPTIONS!!!


DANGER. NOT EXPLOSIONPROOF
NOT VENTILATED.
GROUND ALL ELECTRICAL EQUIP.
DO NOT STORE DRY ICE.
NO SMOKING
WARREN
COLD ROOM I
DO NOT ENTER WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION
FROM LABORATORY DIRECTOR.
RESTRICTED AREA
AUTHORIZED ENTRANCE ONLY
RESTRICTED AREA
AUTHORIZED ENTRANCE ONLY
PLEASE:
DO NOT PLACE DEAD
RATS IN THIS FREEZER.
PLACE THEM IN THE
FREEZER NEXT DOOR.
EMORY
Just in Time
A Guide to Campus Emergencies

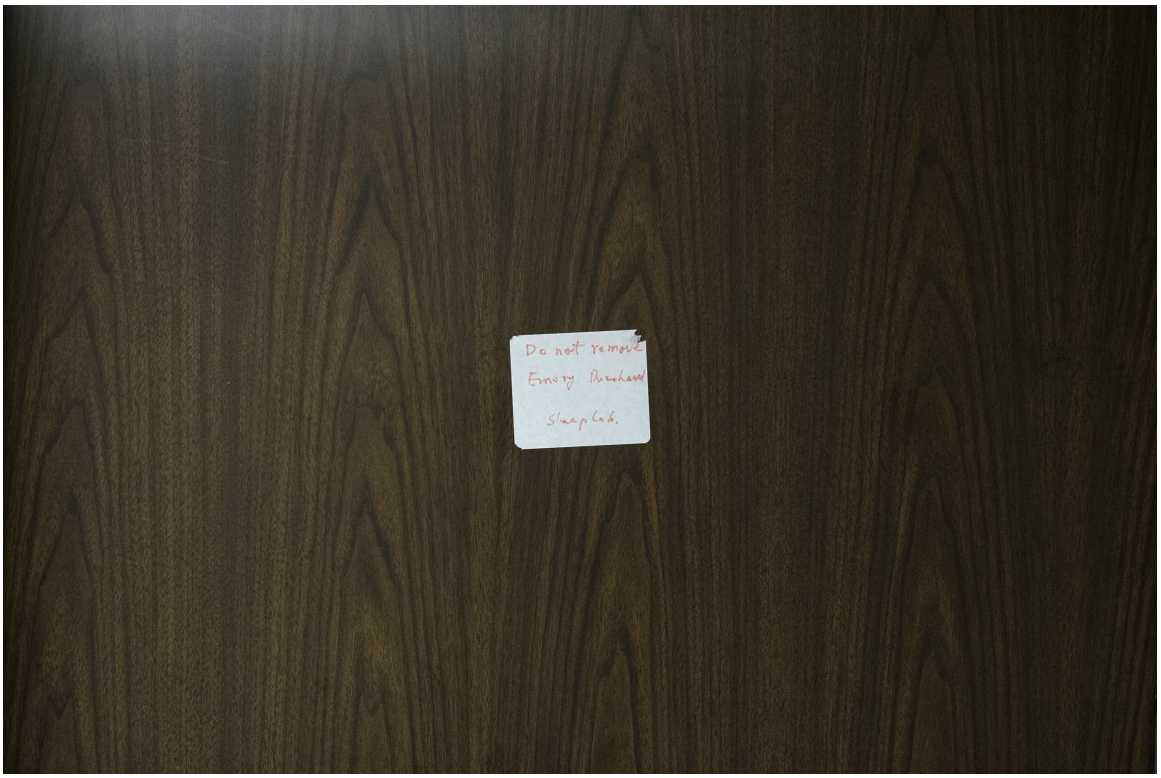

408E
Segregated Cinema Project
Dr. Matthew Bernstein
Dr. Dana F. White
Orphan


Child and Adolescent
Psychiatry
SOUTH WING
317 S-328 S
SMALL AUDITORIUM


Middle East
Research
Program
Institute for the
Study of
Modern Israel
PLEASE PRESS
BUTTON TO CALL
FOR ENTRY -
THANK YOU
OFFICES
408-428 NORTH


If we stop
animal research,
who'll stop
the real killers?


404W
Future
Assignment


Do not remove
Emory
Sleep lab.


EMORY
UNIVERSITY
Environmental Health
and Safety Office
Ready for
Clean Out
Any Questions?
Contact
Kalpana Rengarajan 404-727-8863
or Scott Thomaston 404-727-1349


FIRE
FIRE EXTINGUISHER


2-130






PLEASE
DO NOT
DRINK THE
WATER


Castle
Emory University
ONSITE


BIOHAZARD
Stericycle




Office DEPOT
STOR-ALL








GEL
GLOS


Emory as Place
BANKERS BOX
BANKERS BOX
Briarcliff Campus 413 W


PARKING
FOR AIDS
TRAINING
LOTS B&C
SYLVANIA


Enjoy
Coca-Cola
GUEST
BONUS
1 2
MENTAL
















"THE GENERAL"
EMORY
UNIVERSITY
Marketing, Communications, and
Alumni and Development Records
OpenHouse
Plaza 1000
EMORY
CANDLER
SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This project began as a set of questions prompted by a set of experiences. In the spring of 2009, I discovered that my academic advisor would be leaving Emory; I realized that the study of religion and gender studies no longer intrigued me as it once had; I considered the possibility (for the first time) that my vocational future might not be in the academy; and I found a place, with my camera, that resonated with me on an affective level like no other place had. Out of that contagion of experiences came a body of work, photographs of Emory's Briarcliff Campus, and a set of corresponding questions, beginning with: What is the story of this place? Why did I feel a connection with this place? Later, after exhibiting the photographs a few times, further questions developed: Why do these images seem to generally resonate with people? Why are we drawn to images of ruin? This set of questions fueled several years of research that spanned multiple disciplines. The uniting theme has been a better understanding of place photography exercised through a thorough document of a particular place, Briarcliff. I'd like to think that this project has been both the discovery of these questions, hints at their answers, and a form that mirrors the findings of my work.

Photographer Robert Polidori once noted that he preferred photographing older places because they contained more traces, more memories of years past. Briarcliff is a place steeped in memory, suffuse with traces. I was first drawn to Briarcliff by the post-apocalyptic landscape of abandonment and ruin, but Briarcliff's story sustained my interest. I encountered that story in the archives and in the photographs I made at Briarcliff; that's where I discovered Briarcliff's traces. Neither the recorded history (the

archives) nor the images alone were capable of introducing me to Briarcliff's narrative in the way that the two could together; to speak plainly, this project required the consumption of and the making of both images and words.

Ruin Porn: Concluding Comments

Part of this journey was through a very basic question: Why do we like to look at ruins? I left that question largely unanswered in the chapter on ruin porn, or, better put, I allowed many answers to persist. That was, in part, to allow the chapter on Tuan and Polidori to be able to stand on its own without being interrupted by prejudice about the images and topics in question. Now, however, I'd like to make some observations about ruin photography as a way of uniting the various open strands of the project.

When I first showed my images of Briarcliff, it occurred to me that people were responding to Briarcliff itself – its ruins – more than they were responding to my composition or choice of printing, for instance. There seemed to be a somewhat universal interest in ruins. That intrigued me, both as a challenge to make images of Briarcliff that were as equally descriptive of the place bet less obviously about ruins, and as a prompt to learn more about why ruins seem to have a popular appeal in our culture.

Why do we like to look at ruin photography? The attendant list of reasons (compiled from the ruin porn chapter) has included the visual and cultural effects of 9/11 and the Great Recession; the apparent invitation from ruins, requesting that we tell their story; the ways in which ruins invite reflection on the self, time, and space; multiple sociological, psychological, and neurological theories; and the way in which the silence of ruins (and everything else listed here) enshrines ruins as open symbols. We

experience ruins as symbolic; they mean something to us. We experience them as blank slates, ready for our projections. We see ourselves in ruins. More than anything, ruins stand before us as invitations to engage. Their unfinished and yet inchoate state – this in-between-ness – presents to us passively, as a question, which it seems we can't help but to ponder.

Ruin porn enters the discussion when the interest remains skin-deep, relishing in the gratification of the surface alone. In the introduction, I tried to show, through my correspondence with Jim Griffioen, how one's relationship to the ruins being photographed – e.g., are they in your neighborhood? – is an important factor to consider. Ultimately ruin porn is like any other porn, the fetishization of the superficial with no interest, inclination, or lure to explore beyond the surface. Ruin porn is the aesthetic appreciation for scenes of dereliction. It can be created by photographers; it can be consumed by viewers of images; it's a genre of appreciation for the visceral enjoyment of ruins photography, when the images aren't just divorced from the context of their making; the context isn't even part of the purview. For those consumers of ruin porn who *do* appreciate the context, it only comes as surface appreciation – it's part of the pornography. There's no concerned appreciation for the places being photographed; the story of their context is of interest for the pleasure it brings, not the awareness. Ruin porn is the appreciation for and consumption of dis-concerned photography of ruins.

Form and Context: Photographing Place

The discussion about ruin porn is not just a discussion about ruins. It's a discussion about the consumption of images in general and the significance of context within place photography. Implied throughout this dissertation is an argument that images can stand on their own – viz Robert Polidori's *After the Flood* – but even then they stand in a body of work that is contextualized within a larger event, from a particular perspective, with particular purposes in mind. I'm sure there are individuals who purchased *After the Flood*, to simply enjoy the beautiful photographs, but Polidori's breadth of approach, volume of images, and thoughtful introduction work together to preclude this approach. Context matters and photographers who wish to supply more than beautiful images work mindfully to present that context.

Polidori never speaks – never claims a word – in this book. His images and their collective statement are his perspective. The images are the argument. As a body of work, the whole provides the context for the individual images. It's not the only approach for providing context; consider Richard Misrach's *Petrochemical USA* in which Misrach goes out of his way to provide as much context as possible – maps, overlays, diagrams, dense historical, geographical, and scientific analysis. Misrach's approach is one way of many to supply context and purpose to a body of work.

Nonetheless, given the speed and availability of images in the digital world – even in the print/physical realm – all the premeditated contextualization in the world cannot prevent an image from being excised from the whole, dropped in a Reddit chat room and tagged #ruinporn. Images always stand on their own as distinct statements, regardless of how tirelessly one may work to orient them.

The photograph has a variable relationship to context. A photographic image can at once provide context for a written or otherwise verbal narrative—an aerial photograph provides context to a map; a portrait helps to introduce a coffee date; a documentary photograph of war crimes can provide a more thorough range of conviction. Photographs are powerful in this way, and it's the reason the picture magazine industry rose to prominence in the 1930s and 1940s.

At the same time, a photograph is only a photograph. Any accompanying text is only that, accompanying. The image always stands alone and is therefore always susceptible to being removed from whichever context original language might have been deployed to convey. This is why watermarks were invented, to do whatever possible to prevent the context of the original photographer—usually a personal or company name—from being erased from association with the original production of the image. Watermarks on images are intended to provide the context of attribution, authorship. At the same time, to echo Roland Barthes' argument regarding the authorship of written texts ("The Death of the Author"), for all intensive purposes, when it comes to context, once the photograph is printed, the photographer is dead.[1] To rephrase Barthes it might be fair to suggest, "Once the [Photographer] is gone, the claim to "decipher" a [photograph] becomes quite useless. To give [a Photographer] to a [photograph] is to impose upon that [photograph] a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to

[1]Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Aspen* 5–6, no. 3 (1967), accessed July 14, 2015. http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes. Barthes writes, "It will always be impossible to know, for the good reason that all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes."

close the [interpretation]."[2] There may be a wish for context to travel with certain photographs, but there are other photographs for which the original context—abstract, impressionist images, for instance—for which the photographer's authoritative voice would preclude the open interpretation originally intended for the image. This also applies to documentary style photographs. A photograph of a dying child on an arid floor might actually be *limited* by its ability to convict if its full original context were to maintain attachment to the image.

What then to do when making photographs in such a way as to wish for the context to travel, so to speak, with the images? Said differently, how is one to photograph ruins without eventually allowing the images to fall into the hands of a consumer of ruin porn? Ruin porn is a type of image, a way of photographing, and a way of consuming photographs. A photographer may wish to photograph against that grain; but consumers will interpret as they will. Polidori and Misrach have attempted two different approaches, and while my work is not in that arena of expertise, mine is a third.

Experiencing Briarcliff with my Camera

My own work at Briarcliff has been an attempt to do two main things: first, to as accurately as possible place my photographs within a particular historical context; second, to as mindfully as possible be aware of my own position as a piece of this story, as the photographer behind the images who has his own experiences and ascribes his own set of values and meaning. I've also tried to make beautiful and compelling images, but the real work has been to think of place photography through a Tuanian understanding of

[2]Barthes original quotation: "Once the Author is gone, the claim to "decipher" a text becomes quite useless. To give an Author to a text is to impose upon that text a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to close the writing." See Barthes, "The Death of the Author."

geography – place photography as a way of photographing that is as much about the photographer as it is about the photographed.

As to my own images and their relationship to the ruin porn genre, it's a difficult call for me to make. On one hand, I was initially very viscerally drawn to the textures, rot, and desolation. I photographed through that attraction, and the initial images – peeling paint, mold, open, empty spaces, destroyed rooms – were made with this affective connection in play. Truth be told, if I was aware of ruin porn back then, it was a peripheral understanding. The photographs, especially the early ones of the mansion interior, the dilapidated pool house, and the cottages, are what led me to think more critically about ruins photography. Why were people drawn to my images? Why was I drawn to my images? How do others take pictures of ruins? Early on, I was interested in the surface, not the larger context of the images; the question of Briarcliff's fuller narrative was not top of mind.

That said, the project itself morphed into a more concerned approach. As teachers encouraged me to continue making images – I'm thinking in particular now of the interior photos of Building A in which I paid special attention to signage and bulletin boards in various stages of use – the photographs became more about not only describing a place, but trying to focus on the passage of time, the changing meaning of Briarcliff, and the ways in which multiple time periods of Briarcliff's narrative can be alluded to in one frame. If my early work were to be accused of being ruin porn, I hardly think the accusation would stand in relation to the later photographic work, the historical and theoretical implications, and the entire project as a whole. My interest in Briarcliff's

ruins led me to take stock of my own investment in the place, which ultimately provided a more informed perspective on documenting ruins.

Briarcliff as Place, Place as Site of Production

Yi-Fu Tuan defines place as meaningful, experiential, invested with value. One distinct place will have different meanings to the different people who experience it. Part of the work of place studies is to collect these narratives and to pay attention to the various experiences in order to better understand, appreciate, and plan our lived environment. By hearing others' experiences, a place gains value; value accumulates, enriching the overall sense of a place. Neither Robert Polidori in New Orleans nor my own work at Briarcliff can aptly encapsulate that full range of meaning in either place, even with hundreds of photographs and tens-of-thousands of words. But our work can shed light on how New Orleans and Briarcliff have been places of significant value to many people. As these places are washed away by hurricanes or razed by bulldozers, the images serve as testimony to what has been.

In the history chapter, I paid special attention to the developing narrative of the piece of land that would become Emory's Briarcliff Campus. This work was, of course, retrospective; I stumbled onto Briarcliff and wondered how it got here, so to speak. That retrospective work is largely archival and is best understood as a sort of archaeology of meaning – what did this place mean in the year 1800, 1900, 2000? Another way of asking that question is to look at the primary means of consumption – how was this place used? What was its value as a site of production?

Over the course of Briarcliff's brief history it has functioned as agricultural space, residential space, a semi-public recreational space (zoo, pool, golf course), commercial space (farm, water bottling facility, laundry, pool, zoo), healthcare (DeKalb Addiction Recover Center, GHMI), and education (GMHI, Emory). Another way of stating it is to describe what Briarcliff has produced: food, shelter, water, domestic services, entertainment, medical care, and education. This unique history has turned Briarcliff into a geographical palimpsest with rich, often hidden, layers of each preceding period.

Briarcliff Today

Emory vacated the entire Briarcliff Campus by September 1, 2014. The mansion, adjoining buildings, and surrounding cottages, had been vacant for years, but Buildings A and B had been in some form of use since 1998. Building A, the main building, visible from Briarcliff Road and the anchor building of the campus had accommodated various small institutes (of no more than a dozen people) and research labs since Emory's acquisition of the property. However, from a financial perspective, the cost to maintain facilities (e.g., HVAC and roof) reached a point that it would be cheaper to relocate all existing offices than to continue to maintain Building A and B. The electricity bill for Building A alone was $25,000 per month, $300,000 a year. For years the primary occupants of the campus, Continuing Education and various Department of Psychiatry programs, had complained (along with other smaller programs) about Building A's condition, requesting that they be relocated elsewhere. There were also numerous reports of health concerns related to environmental issues of the occupied buildings. The university saw no historical value in maintaining the buildings, especially when its

tenants were displeased and the cost to maintain the buildings had proven cost prohibitive. With the exception of Campus Services (facilities and grounds maintenance), whose offices occupy the lowest level of Building A, parking lot space, and part of one cottage, the entire campus was evacuated.



Figure 23. Rendering of Library Services Center.[3]

In the fall of 2014, just a few months after relocating all former tenants, Emory broke ground on Briarcliff's first new permanent building since the 1960s, the Library Services Center (LSC). The LSC is a 4.6-acre partnership between Georgia Tech and Emory, and is expected to open in October 2015. It will house many of collections currently in the Georgia Tech's Library, and it will consolidate Emory materials currently stored in various locations.

[3]Emory Libraries and Information, "Library Service Center," accessed http://web.library.emory.edu/about/libraries/other-libraries/library-service-center.html.



Figure 24. Progress of LSC construction, July 2015.[4]

The LSC will be a high-volume, state-of-the-art, climate-controlled archive and access facility that will be able to contain 4 million volumes. Emory and Tech will grant each other access to the collections and the land is optimized for additional adjacent modules, should off-site archiving prove to be continually beneficial in the future. Located in the southwest corner of the property—where the children's cottage stood until the summer of 2011—any development in this area is largely out of the way, tucked away in an unused corner of the campus. That said, it is surprisingly larger of a structure than the images suggest.

In the spring of 2015, the gatehouse near the entrance of the campus, which had been vacant and rotting for years – I recall seeing gaping holes in the roof as recent as 2010 – was finally removed. In August 2015, the interior components of Cottage 1 – couches, filing cabinets, HVAC equipment – could be found in piles just outside the main doors to the building. Black tarpaulin covered the windows – the first steps of demolition. I'm told the cottages will be progressively removed over the next months, and in fall 2015, the main entrance to the campus will receive new curb cuts.

[4]Emory Libraries and Information.

For now, the main buildings of the campus, with the exception of the recently removed rear cottages (6,7, and 8), remain in tact: cottages 1-5, Buildings A and B, the mansion, greenhouse, mansion outbuilding, and the EmTech module adjacent to the greenhouses. In the office space of the renovated hospital, padded cells still exist; in the mansion, one can find a lone mid-century gurney and two-way mirrors; and in the various empty buildings are hauntings, either vagabonds making camp, neighborhood kids vandalizing, or the rumored sightings of specters. This place, layered as it is, is saturated with intermingling memories.



Figure 25. Photograph of the destruction of the gatehouse.[5]

Briarcliff was acquired by Emory University in 1998 under the specific understanding that it must be used for educational purposes. A plot of land that large and that close to the main campus was a valuable acquisition for the university, so valuable that it won't be renovated fully until the tens of millions of dollars necessary to raze the remaining buildings and restore the mansion can be dedicated to a project central to Emory's mission. For now, the southwest corner of the property is a small enough

[5]Save Briarcliff/Candler Mansion's Photos, accessed July 15, 2015. https://www.facebook.com/Briarcliff.mansion/photos/pb.1549914395224794.-2207520000.1439662044./1651577205058512/?type=1&theater.

allocation (for the Library Services Center) so as to not interrupt any future plans; it leaves available 90% of the existing campus. Emory is not permitted to sell the Briarcliff Campus without the explicit permission of the state. However, it seems unlikely that Emory would ever relinquish such valuable real estate. It's fair to assume that for decades to come, Emory will own and use this piece of land in some way.

As such, the photography portion of this project could continue indefinitely, for as long as Emory owns Briarcliff. This moment in Briarcliff's history is an apt stopping point for my own work there not only because my graduate program has run its course but also because this moment in Briarcliff's history is a pensive moment, a pause between instantiations. Also, it's reasonable to presume that once the Library Services Center is complete, it could be years or decades before further development occurs. So now is a good time to conclude my work on Briarcliff.

Changing Meaning: Tuan and Briarcliff

I haven't photographed Briarcliff in months. I have occasionally touched base with my contacts in Emory's finance office and facilities team, those with their pulse on future building (or destruction) plans, but it's mostly to make sure I know as much of the story as possible for when the final submission of the project occurs. I think of this project as a contribution to Emory's archives as much as it may belong in a scholarly journal or personal portfolio. For some time, a goal of this work has been to have something to give back to Emory.

Truth be told, I no longer value Briarcliff in the ways I did in 2009 when I first discovered it. It's meaning has changed. When I first stumbled onto the mansion and

destroyed cottages, I was able to resonate deeply with a place in ruin. It was a time when my academic future seemed uncertain. I had been working for so many years toward a career in the academy and during that spring semester in 2009, that pathway was dissolving before me.

Tuan is quick to note that meaning is something that grows subtly over time; it's rarely an immediate sensation. I do think that what I experienced at Briarcliff six years ago was a rare affective bond that arises immediately. I'm not sure if the metaphor works but it is the same sort of immediate value that might also come from a refugee who immediately experiences relief, freedom, and safety upon entering a welcoming land. The comparison is trite, but the point is that I was predisposed, I think, to receive and experience Briarcliff in the state that I found it. It was like a sad song after a break-up. Briarcliff and I lined up at just the right time.

Tuan's view of geography is that the field is greatly lacking without the singular inclusion of the human experience in place. Tuan asked geographers to consider the significance of affect and experience as ways of theorizing the built and natural world. We don't know our world if we don't know our experiences in our world. And we don't know our experiences if we aren't attuned to ourselves. It's an attitude generally eschewed in academic discourse, the scholar's own voice and feelings. Place, according to Tuan, is indiscernible apart from such a perspective.

My experience at Briarcliff was not an insignificant research component, ancillary to the traditionally objective components of geographical study (e.g., archival research, land survey). Rather, to take Tuan seriously on the claim, that the study of place is nothing without the central inclusion of affective experiences, is to be both attuned to

one's own experience in place and to find creative ways to document and share that experience. In this dissertation, and throughout the work leading to it, I have tried to be mindful of this; my study of Briarcliff is as much a geographical report of place as it is an example of how one might produce place research through the testimonies of autobiography and photography.

Through my relationship with the place and through my own life experience, Briarcliff's meaning has changed over the past six years (of my work there). When I discovered Briarcliff it was abandoned, in ruin, providing a tableau to visually commensurate with my own experience. My photographs predominantly focused on decay and dereliction. As I surveyed the campus and looked at my images I only saw the present moment as the culmination of the past. I read ruins as very slow final statements of a previous time. So self-consumed with my own life moment and yet so unsure of my own future, I transferred this temporal view onto Briarcliff's ruins. I rarely thought of Briarcliff's future, apart from the immediate plans the University might have in regards to its development, immediate being the time of my graduate work.

A more accurate read of Briarcliff attends to the movement of time and the ever-encroaching future. Like all places, Briarcliff is in a state of transition, a moment between larger moments. Though it is expected to be securely included in Emory's university system for many years to come, Briarcliff might best be described now as in transition. With the dismissal of its occupants, the slate has been cleaned for a new instantiation. The new library building may give clues as to what that future entails, but I really think the library building is an exception, not the rule. After a few conversations with David Payne, Senior Director of Operations for Business and Administration at

Emory, I don't believe this building project – or even subsequent adjacent library buildings, should they be built – is an indicator of Briarcliff's future. It registers as more of an expedience than a part of a master plan.

If I were to begin this project today, to start over, the photographs I'd make of Briarcliff would be images of transition, not ruin. I'd be attuned to pieces of the landscape that show endings meeting beginnings. I'd be attuned to the open-endedness of the campus's current state. I'd pay attention to the space in between distinct places of significance – courtyards, thresholds, hallways, different textures meeting on another, the natural world meeting the built world, the manicured natural world meeting the unkempt natural world. Maybe that's what I was already seeing in the bulletin board sequence. Maybe that's what I was already seeing in the panoramas. Both of those sequences were made late in the project. For fear of stating the obvious, the images I've made of Briarcliff reflect the value I've attributed to Briarcliff, a value derivative of both my experience in the world (away from Briarcliff) and my experience at Briarcliff. I think it's a fair conclusion that my experiences on and off Briarcliff's campus gave me a new appreciation and broader definition of ruin, progressing from a ruin as a monolithic period at the end of a historical statement, to something of an ellipsis.

Briarcliff's Future

I concluded the history chapter by describing a few of the renovation proposals for Briarcliff Campus. As I've gotten to know the campus and as I've become familiar with the business team that makes large scale development plans, I've had a chance to see some of the original master plan options from the late 1990s. They primarily include

low-rise mixed-use buildings. Briarcliff is completely surrounded by residential streets, so there's little chance that the campus itself would ever be turned into undergraduate housing. Neighborhood residents wouldn't stand for the noise, traffic, or coed shenanigans. I presume Druid Hills' residents would be about as excited to entertain undergraduate monkey business as they were 80 years ago when the Briarcliff monkeys escaped from the zoo. Emory values its relationship with the neighborhood it inhabits, Druid Hills, and will go out of its way to keep that relationship healthy. I think this necessarily precludes undergraduate housing. Additionally, housing doesn't seem to be an immediate need, especially with the several dorms that have been built or renovated in just the past few years.

So what will become of the Briarcliff Campus? In the few years that I've been thinking about Briarcliff's future, there's really been only one idea that's stayed with me. That's not to say that there are not others; I simply am not intimately aware enough of the immediate needs of the university, nor the budget allocations for those needs. So the plan that I propose may not be the most informed plan, as such a plan should be, but it is one that I think would satisfy many key objectives of the university in a compelling way. I expect there to be some naïve assumptions in this plan, so I submit it with the full realization that it might be a pie-in-the-sky type of idea. So, perhaps I should rephrase the question: If I had a hundred million dollars and could do whatever I wanted with the Briarcliff Campus, what would I do?

I would design a peace park that converted all (but the mansion, its connected buildings, and the new library building) into a walkable, wild but maintained green space. It would be part park, part farmland, and part peace institute. The goal would be to

provide a benefit to the University and the surrounding neighborhood rather than merely sliding in under their radar of neighbors' criticism. At the same time, it would be a full lean into Emory's commitment to sustainability. Instead of tearing down old buildings to erect new ones, I'd tear down old buildings to make way for new trees, gardens, and walking paths. There would be more than average landscaping and maintenance needs, but presumably at a cost significantly less than the $300,000 annual electricity bill the campus currently creates. It would also provide ample farmland and open-air research and classroom settings. Imagine biology students having lab days at Briarcliff, cataloguing the prevalence of native beetles in the tomato garden or tracing the nitrogen content of the soil. Imagine a university compost pile. Imagine sustainable gardening facilities (partly in the abandoned greenhouse) that go beyond the press-release version (of sustainable farming on campus) and actually make a dent in the dining facilities' sourcing.

The anchor of the peace park would be the multi-million dollar renovation of the mansion. The mansion would become part dormitory, part lecture hall, part meditation center, part offices, part classrooms.

In 1998, Emory began a partnership with His Holiness the Dalia Lama and Drepung Loseling Monastic University, the acclaimed Tibetan Buddhist academic institution. The Emory-Tibet Partnership (ETP) goal is to "bring together the best of the Western and Tibetan Buddhist intellectual traditions for their mutual enrichment and for the discovery of new knowledge."[6] Apart from the official relationship with His Holiness (as Presidential Distinguished Professor and occasional lecturer), there are several other

[6]Emory University, "About the Emory-Tibet Partnership," 2014, accessed July 15, 2015. https://tibet.emory.edu/about/index.html.

major initiatives within ETP. As part of that arrangement, every year college undergrads travel to India to learn from Tibetan monks, and every year Tibetan monks travel to Emory to take classes in the college. Additionally, the partnership houses research studies on the ancient type of Tibetan meditation, Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT).

The monks who register as undergraduates often live off campus in small apartments; their traditional minimalist lifestyle requires few creature comforts. The upper floors of the mansion are perfectly suited to be renovated (back) into the permanent residence for the monks currently in the program. Plus, with the ample space in the mansion, the program could expand to include more monks, perhaps as many as double. Downstairs, on the first level, D'Ovies Hall would be turned into a central lecture hall and mediation center suitable for teaching meditation classes, research studies, and lecture series.

The ETP office is on the main campus. The research facilities are off the main campus at an ancillary building on Clifton Rd. And the monks live even further off campus. Imagine all of these needs being met by one centralized facility. Further, imagine a suite dedicated solely to His Holiness, his own bedroom and study for when he travels to Atlanta.

With the dismissal of several university departments in 2012 – including my home department, the Institute of the Liberal Arts, and my secondary department, Visual Arts –a handful of new departments and initiatives were designated as growth opportunities for the university; one of those areas was contemporary Chinese studies.

The final piece of my vision is including the offices, classrooms, and needs of the burgeoning China Studies program *in* the mansion as well. China now forcibly occupies Tibet, and Tibetans are refugees in India. My vision of the Briarcliff campus is built around the importance of these two programs, ETP and Chinese Studies, and the work of peace. Whether or not that is a reasonable or prudent plan, it's one that has occurred to me as a monumental value add to the university and the community, one that I think would be a very fine start to the future of that place.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